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REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM IN BENGAL

1920—1937

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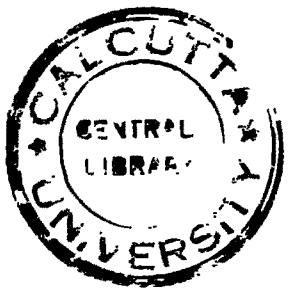

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Needless to say, the responsibility for this final product is, of course, wholly my own.

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INTRODUCTION

Different names have been given to the participants in the armed movement in India by differnt institutions or individuals, e.g., (a) terrorists, (b) revolutionary terrorists, (c) revolutionaries and (d) national revolutionaries. The British rulers branded them as terrorists in order to discredit them in the eyes of the public. This is evident from the Rowlatt Committee Report of 1918[1] and the speech given in London in 1932 by Charles Tegart, ex-Commissioner of Police, Calcutta.[2]

The term 'terrorism' has been used so widely over a long period that even some of the participants in the armed struggle and some historians of modern times seem to have accepted it without going into its merits.[3] This may be due partly to a force of habit and partly to their ignorance of the aims and objectives of the entire revolutionary movement. An Indian historian[4] and one eminent intellectual[5], himself a participant in this movement,

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1 Rowlatt Committee Report, 1918, Calcutta, 1918.

2 Charles Tegart : Terrorism in India, London, 1932.

3 David M. Laushey : Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left : aspects of regional nationalism in India, 1905 - 1942, Calcutta, 1975.

4 Sumit Sarkar : Modern India, 1885 - 1947, New Delhi, 1983, p. 144.

5 Gopal Halder : 'Revolutionary Terrorism'; Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, ed. by Atul Chandra Gupta, Jadavpur, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 224 - 257.

have characterised it as 'revolutionary terrorism', while a Marxist intellectual-cum-revolutionary has called the armed freedom-fighters national revolutionaries.[6]

The title of this thesis is Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal, 1920 - 1937. A few words in defence of this choice of name in preference to others may not be out of place here. The term 'revolutionary terrorism' is used because the revolutionaries, though they resorted to violence in order to instil fear into the hearts of the British officials, did not believe in terrorism for terrorism's sake. Rather they considered terrorism a necessary and inevitable phase in the struggle for independence.[7] However, the limitations of this outlook were evident in full measure in their style of work which set little or no store by the organisation and participation of the masses of workers and peasants. Only in the reminiscences of Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee[8] and in the publications of the Hindusthan Republican Association (H.R.A.)[9] at a later date can one discern the stirrings of

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6 Dr.G.Adhikary : 'A Note on the Development of Politics and Ideology of the National Revolutionaries (Miscalled "Terrorists")'. Presented at a seminar of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Chittagong uprising held on 20 February 1981 in New Delhi.

7 James Ewart : Terrorism in India, 1917 - 36, compiled by the Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept., Govt. of India, Reprinted. New Delhi, 1974, p. 2.

8 Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : Biplabi Jibaner Smriti, Calcutta, 1363 B.S., p. 28.

9 Gopal Thakur : Bhagat Singh : The Man & his ideas. New Delhi, 1953, p. 39.

a new urge of reaching out to the people and broadening the base of their movement. Although their goal was national independence, the path they followed remained essentially terroristic. Hence the term 'revolutionary terrorism' has been used in this thesis in preference to the official custom of branding the movement as mere terrorism. I have, however, frequently used the word 'revolutionaries' to denote revolutionary terrorists only to ease the pressure on space.

While the present study has been undertaken as an attempt to resolve the continuing debate on the nature of the armed movement in India, the choice of the period 1920 - 1937 is grounded on the fact that these were seminal years which saw the rise of new currents and new conflicts as also some major changes in the mode of struggle. The rapid development of the working-class movement and the dissemination of socialist ideas were destined to bring about a qualitative transformation in the revolutionary movement and this was first noticeable in a big way during this period. These interacting processes which marked a turning point in the development of the leftist movement need to be properly assessed.

Before entering into the subject matter of the study, it will perhaps be prudent to refer to the revolutionary terrorist movement during 1902 - 1918. For the sake of analysis, these years may be conveniently divided into two sub-periods : from 1902 to 1914 and from 1914 to 1918.Though part of the same

historical process, each sub-period has its own distinctive features. The movement during the first period (1902 - 1914) (i) arose as a part of and in the wake of the Swadeshi movement. (ii) Religiosity as an inspiring ideology was then a potent force, especially in view of the general Hindu revivalist ideas prevalent during the Swadeshi movement. (iii) The first period was also marked by a very limited outlook. Punishment of individual tyrants seemed to be the principal task and the demand for complete independence was only vaguely aired.The mode of struggle was pre-eminently and predominantly confined to acts of individual terrorism. (iv) The revolutionary network was narrow, local and regional, having no effective reach beyond Bengal and no viable link with like-minded persons in other parts of India. (v) The weapons used were more primitive and almost exclusively indigenous. (vi) There was living link between the nationalists and the revolutionary terrorists; Bepin Chandra Pal declined to give witness against Aurobindo Ghosh in the Maniktala Conspiracy Case (1908).[10] Both of them had worked for the Bandemataram. C. R. Das, himself one of the vice-presidents of the Anushilan, defended Aurobindo in the Maniktala case and the revolutionaries in the Dacca Conspiracy Case (1910)[11].

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[10] Nalini Kishore Guha : Banglay Biplabbad, 4th ed., Calcutta, 1376 B.S., p. 14.

[11] Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, (ed.) : Freedom Struggle and the Anushilan Samiti, Vol.I,Calcutta,1979,pp.32,56.

But the second sub-period (1914-1918) is marked by some features which are at once new and significant. (i) A change in outlook and ideology is noticed in the diminishing influence of religion[12]. (ii) Instead of confining their programme of action to individual terrorism, the revolutionaries conjured up a new vision of all-Bengal and all-India uprising. Jatin Mukherjee (alias Bagha Jatin), in co-operation with other stray revolutionary elements in Bengal, arranged to secure arms from Germany with a view to waging an all-out war against the British. In 1915 Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal drew up, in co-operation with the Ghadar revolutionaries, a grandiose plan of organising rebellion inside the army. But both the plans fell through due to betrayal. (iii) Weapons used in this phase were relatively modern. The revolutionaries succeeded in capturing and using 50 mauser pistols with 46 rounds of ammunition. From now on, greater stress would be laid on securing foreign-made pistols and revolvers than on manufacturing not so effective indigenous bombs.

There were, however, similarities between the two sub-periods : (i) Both the phases ended with the desertion by the dadas : Aurobindo abruptly left his comrades in 1908 and retired to Pondicherry; Rashbehari Bose fled to Japan and permanently settled there. (ii) The elitist approach of the leaders in both the phases stood in the way of enlisting mass support. Jatin Mukherjee and his comrades were chased by the local people of

12 Ibid, p. 70.

Balasore as dacoits and they had to open fire on the pursuers to frighten them away. There was also hardly any ripple in the country when the plan of an all-India rising miscarried. The leaders also failed to win over the Muslims to their side. (iii) During both these sub-periods, there were as yet no attempts on the part of the revolutionaries to voice their demands from the Congress platform or to use the Congress organisation as a cover for their conspitorial work.

By 1919, India entered a completely new period of struggle for freedom. Gandhiji and the Khilafat leaders injected into the Indian body politic a new idea - the idea of mass movement for swaraj. Precisely at this point of time, thanks to the Amnesty, the Bengal revolutionaries came out of the jails. But they faced a serious problem : their old ideas and methods had proved ineffective and they did not know which way to go. Gandhiji appealed to them to suspend their secret revolutionary activities for at least a year to make his Non-Cooperation movement a success. Most of the revolutionaries decided to give him a chance. A few did not agree and even those who agreed, supported him on tactical grounds, without making "a fetish of non-violence"[13]. A discussion of this interesting but involved debate is the main theme of the opening chapter. An attempt has also been made in

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13 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : 'Biplabi Gandhi O Bharater Biplab Andolon'; Gandhi Parikrama, ed. by Sailesh Kr. Banerjee, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1377 B.S., p.204.

this chapter to re-examine and refute the charges often levelled against the Hak-katha, a journal allegedly brought out by Pulin Das as the mouthpiece of renegades who had sold their souls to the government for a few pieces of silver.

The withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement in 1922 came as a shock to the revolutionaries. C.R. Das criticised Gandhiji and adopted a new tactical line of contesting and winning elections in order "to wreck the constitution from within". He found in the revolutionaries cadres for the Swarajya Party. The revolutionaries, on the other hand, found in the Swarajya Party an excellent legal cover for their secret revolutionary activities. When they were prosecuted and persecuted, C.R. Das manfully stood by them. But there were times when their mutual relations came under severe strain and reached almost breaking points. But none of the partners of this uneasy alliance dared finally to part company with each other for obvious factional reasons. C.R. Das did not risk the loss of support of the revolutionaries who were particularly effective for organisational work during election campaigns; the revolutionaries too did not break away from Das behind whose back they might still further their revolutionary activities. A detailed study of this political marriage of convenience forms the core of the second chapter.

Disgusted with the chicanery of constitutional politics and go-slow tactics of the war-weary dadas, the young militants

under Santosh Mitra started violent actions as a shock therapy. Soon he was joined by militants of other parties - the Anushilan, the Jugantar and the Atmonnati. Sachin Sanyal of the Hindusthan Republican Association (H.R.A.) amalgamated all these elements in a new party in 1925, called the New Violence Party (N.V.P.). From Chittagong to Lahore via Meerat a united militant party sprang up which proved to be a source of headache to the authorities who acted promptly and decisively. The police arrested some members of this party and launched the Dakshineswar Conspiracy Case, a detailed study of which has been presented in the third chapter. Apart from this, a brief analysis of the interrelationship between the New Violence Party, the Anushilan and the Hindusthan Republican Association forms a part of this chapter.

In the fourth chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the unprincipled, dubious and sordid factional fight inside the Congress of which the Karmi Sangha was an active participant. In a subsequent part of the chapter, the impact of the October Revolution on a section of the revolutionaries and the formation and role of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and several youth and student organisations have been discussed briefly. Other topics covered in this chapter include the Calcutta Congress(1928), the attempt at unity of the revolutionary parties,the failure of this attempt, the rise of the Revolt Group,which emerged as a loud protest against prolonged inactivity and soul-kiling mutual

wranglings of the dadas. The horizon of the Revolt Group had been widened by a study of the accounts of the Irish Rebellion. Their outlook was no longer limited by the ideas of the Gita which once conditioned the vision of the early revolutionaries. The Revolt Group, before it could strike out, was inescapably caught in the dragnet of the Mechuabazar Conspiracy Case. The few who escaped the net made vaim attempts at militant actions here and there. A detailed study of the role of the revolutionary terrorists in the Calcutta Corporation also forms a substantial part of the fourth chapter.

Chapters V and VI deal with revolutionary activities in two widely separated districts, namely, Chittagong on the Burmese border and Midnapore bordering Orissa and Bihar. Revolutionary activities in both the districts, during the period, merit a close analysis because of their certain unique features. In Chittagong the revolutionaries organised an armed uprising with a view to liberating Chittagong even if for a couple of days so that it might serve as a model for the rest of India. Even though no such attempt was made in Midnapore, its record of success is second only to that of Chittagong. A careful study of revolutionary activities in these two districts, however, brings to light quite a few common features. (i) Religion as an inspiring ideology had a very negligible role to play, whether in Chittagong or in Midnapore. (ii) Another unique and unprecedented feature, common

to both the districts, was the participation of middle-class women in considerable numbers in the revolutionary movement, thus making it difficult for the police to deal with it. (iii) Since the revolutionaries of both these districts enjoyed considerable support among sections of the urban middle class, it was relatively easy for them to gather new recruits for their struggle. Young militants, in fact, were never in short supply[14]. (iv) In both these districts, however, the revolutionaries tried heroically to come out of the narrow confines of middle-class politics and switch over to mass work. In Chittagong, Surjya Sen being inspired by the Saya Sen movement in Burma (1930-31) realised the importance of mass-contact; in Midnapore the soil was ploughed up deeply by the massive Salt Satyagraha, enabling the revolutionaries to strike firmer roots among the people. In both the districts, the revolutionaries made considerable impact on the people, politics and the rulers. The people in general were so electrified by their exploits that they came forward to provide the revolutionaries with shelter, food and money. (v) The revolutionaries chalked out and pursued a path of continuous terrorism against the administration hoping thereby to paralyse British rule in both the districts. Lives of white men were indeed made insecure; they spent their time like condemned prisoners in two

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14 R.E.A. Ray : Report on the Activities of the Terrorists in Bengal during the period April-December, 1930, Bengal Government Press, 1933, p.11.

cages - in the office by day and in the bungalow at night[15]. Some judges declined to take up their offices for fear of reprisals; some asked for early retirement to save their necks. The revolutionary terrorists had largely succeeded in putting the fear of God into the hearts of tyrants. In both the districts, the authorities adopted all sorts of penal measures to contain and crush the movement including special tribunals, summary trials, third degree methods, imposition of punitive taxes, imposition of curfew, introduction of identify cards etc., but succeeeded in crushing the movement only after paying a heavy price. (vi) Both in Chittagong and in Midnapore the authorities tried hard to plant agents inside the movement. In Chittagong, they succeeded to some extent in recruiting agents, even from among the revolutionaries themselves[16]. But they failed, by and large, in Midnapore. Their targets of recruitment were members of the mahisya community. But, thanks to the Civil Disobedience movement, the political atmosphere was so surcharged in Midnapore that the mahisyas as a caste stood solidly by the revolutionaries[17]. There was hardly a single case of recruitment of police agent from the ranks of the revolutionaries in Midnapore. So solid was the phalanx they raised.

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15 Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta : India Wrests Freedom, Calcutta, 1982, p. 78.

16 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl 22. p. 19. Home (Pol) Dept., West Bengal Secretariat.

17 Ibid, Sl 22, p. 21.

The Chittagong revolutionaries, profiting from the experiences of the early revolutionaries, kept their plan of action completely secret, changed their technique of struggle, adopted guerrilla tactics of hit and run and neither banked on nor aspired for foreign arms like Bagha Jatin or the New Violence Party. Rather they looked upon the enemy's armoury as their principal source of supply of arms. This time they succeeded in vindicating a great revolutionary principle that any movement, however heroic, was foredoomed to failure unless it enjoyed active and continuous mass-support.

The seventh chapter deals with the activities of the Anushilan during 1932-1937, when its principal members were thinking of organising an all-India uprising. But their thoughts did not go beyond the stage of vague speculation. Before they could fire any shot, the authorities launched pre-emptive attacks by initiating conspiracy cases like the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case and the Titagarh Conspiracy Case. The rapid decline of the movement also clearly reveals that the objective political conditions in the country, more so in Bengal, were no longer suitable for the terrorist mode of struggle against the Raj.

One of the closing chapters (Chapter VIII) deals with the prolonged and painful heart-searching undertaken by hundreds of revolutionary terrorists both inside and outside jails. There were, it is true, some earlier individual converts to communism

(a section of the Anushilan headed by Gopen Chakraborty and Dharani Goswami, and individuals like Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta and others), but those isolated cases of conversion, did not as yet indicate any new positive trend inside the revolutionary movement. Like one or two early swallows, they did not make the summer. Attempts were made in the late 20s and early 30s to band together those elements who were groping towards a socialist orientation. They are better known by their modern name, i.e., as Terro-Communists. The best examples of this trend were the Socialist Legaue of Santosh Mitra, the Indian Proletariat Party (I.P.R.P.) of Hooghly and others who were drawing away from Hindu religiosity and moving closer to Marxian philosophy; still the old ideas of active heroes and romantic revolutionism leading the passive and inert masses persisted in their thoughts and actions. A large section of the revolutionaries who were apprehended in the 30s began to ponder over the reasons of their past failures. The heroic strikes and struggles of the working classes in India, the turn of events in international politics, the economic depression in the capitalist world, the success of the First Five-Year Plan in the U.S.S.R. and finally, the gathering storm signalised by the rise of fascism in Europe stimulated their thoughts, enlarged their field of vision, helped them to forsake the path that had led them into a blind alley and switch over to the communist mode of thinking, organisation and

struggle. But this change-over was neither sudden nor smooth. The converts had to pass through many a sleepless night, tormented by mental agony and tortured by physical assaults from rivals who were still beholden to an esoteric past. This transformation has been discussed critically and in minute details and endeavour has been made to explain why most of the detenus, before or after their release, joined the Communist Party of India.

The final chapter attempts a brief survey of the British policy over the entire period for containing and crushing revolutionary terrorism in Bengal.

Among the numerous source materials, the following have been studied and tapped as thoroughly as it was possible for me : Home Political Files, Home Judicial Proceedings, and Police and Intelligence Files available in the National Archives of India, New Delhi; relevant documents housed in the West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta; Special Branch and Intelligence Branch, Calcutta and the Home Political Department, Writers' Buildings, Calcutta. I have also studied the proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, used fairly exhaustively the information available in contemporary periodicals, newspapers and journals, and looked into a large number of government publications and other secondary materials, mainly memoirs, including some unpublished monographs prepared by the revolutionaries themselves

as well as oral testimonies of more than sixty surviving revolutionaries in and around Calcutta. Use has been made of two personal jail diaries kept by Bhupesh Gupta and Tincowri Mukherjee, both of whom played prominent roles in the Indian communist movement in later years. These diaries contain class-notes on different aspects of Marxism. Two letters addressed to me by Sudhangshu Adhikary of the Young Comrades' League and Kali Sarkar of the Hilli dacoity - fame have been very useful in understanding the mood of the revolutionaries at that time.

Nevertheless I am aware that there will remain big gaps in our knowledge of the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal. Nothing can be sillier than to think that it is already a much-explored field of study and what is not already known is not worth knowing. The economic, social and cultural roots of this movement can be unearthed and brought to light if only fresh and diligent studies are undertaken, especially at regional and local levels. Only then can the multi-dimensional character of this movement be adequately ascertained.

Chapter I

BENGAL REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT 1920 - 1922

The revolutionary activities which gathered considerable momentum during the First World War were largely suppressed by the incarceration of the leaders under Regulation III of 1818 and the internment of the rank and file militants under the Defence of India Act and other subsequent repressive measures[1]. A total number of 1,262 persons were interned in Bengal under the Defence of India Act and 130 under the Regulation III[2]. However, some of the leaders escaped the arms of the law and went overseas; notable among them were Narendra Nath Bhattacharya (later known as M. N. Roy) and Abani Mukherjee[3]. Seven leaders of the Jugantar viz., Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Atul Ghosh, Nalini Kar, Satish Chakraborty, Manmatha Biswas and Panchugopal Banerjee, each carrying on his head a reward of Rs.5000/-, were still absconding[4].

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1 Home (Pol) File 302/1923. Home (Pol) Dept., W. Bengal Secretariat.

2 Terrorism in India, 1917 - 1936, p. 11.

3 Gautam Chattopadhyay : Roosh Biplab O Bangler Mukti Andolan, Calcutta, 1967, p. 1.

4 Arun Chandra Guha : First Spark of Revolution : the early phase of India's struggle for Independence, 1900 - 1920, Bombay, 1971, p. 418.

Since the Armistice, the Government of Bengal was pursuing "a deliberate policy of releasing gradually those detenus who could be presumed to lead the lives of peaceful citizens."[5] This policy was successful as only a negligible proportion of the detenus who had been released reverted to revolutionary terrorism.[6]

While welcoming the official policy of gradual release as "belated justice" which was better than "denial of justice", Akhil Chandra Dutta, a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, requested the authorities on the floor of the Council to release all who were detained under the Defence of India Act, 1915[7]. Henry Wheeler, Home member, in his reply took objection to expressions like "belated justice" and "denial of justice" and reported that 481 were already released since the Armistice and that another batch of about 100 was about to be set free. Of the remaining 485 still detained, 259 were at home under surveillance[8]. The gradual release of prisoners following the Armistice and the Royal Proclamation of December 1919 placed the authorities in a state of helplessness. This was expressed by Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal in his private diary on 4 January 1920. He noted that Montague, the Secretary of State for India, had placed

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5 Home (Pol) File 302/1923. Home (Pol) Dept., W.Bengal Secretariat.

6 Ibid.

7 The Statesman, 22 January 1919.

8 Ibid.

them upon the horns of an intolerable dilemma. If the political prisoners were released in accordance with the spirit of the Amnesty Proclamation, there was a grave risk of reformation of the two revolutionary organisations - the Anushilan and the Jugantar - and a recrudescence of anarchical crimes from which the police and their agents were bound to suffer; if, on the other hand, the prisoners were kept in detention in defiance of the Proclamation, the government would find themselves in an even worse position. Chelmsford, the Governor-General, preferred the first alternative and pleaded for it "as a gamble with a sporting chance."[9] Anyway, most of the political prisoners were released in batches. The last batch was released from the Rajsahi Jail by the end of 1920[10].

After a long period of imprisonment, the revolutionaries on their release faced a serious problem. Their organisations were dispersed and party links were snapped. Many of them did not have any shelter or any means of livelihood. At the initiative of the Y.M.C.A. and R. Raha, a well-known contractor, and in cooperation with B.C.Chatterjee and S.R. Das, both well-known barristers in Calcutta, the government opened a free kitchen-type mess at Beniapukur, Calcutta for the released political prisoners. The Anushilan leader Nalini Kishore Guha became its chief organiser. The inmates of this mess were mostly Anushilan workers.[11]

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9 Zetland papers (Microfilm), Reel I, 10 L/M2/31, National Archives of India (N.A.I.).

10 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : interview with the author, Calcutta, September, 1976.

11 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : Biplaber Padachinha, Orient Longman ed., Calcutta, 1973, p. 149.

The way the mess was run was sharply criticised by Ashu Kahali of Palong, Faridpur. Reading about this mess in the newspapers, he asked indignantly, "why have they crowded there? Could they not sell newspapers to earn livelihood."? [12] Among the inmates of the mess was Jogesh Chatterjee, a known leader of the Anushilan. He wrote that he stayed in the Y.M.C.A. hostel at Beniapukur where some released political prisoners found temporary shelter under the supervision of Nalini Kishore Guha.[13]

The Jugantar workers, on the other hand, stayed away from this mess and drew closer to the Congress. Through Satyen Mitra, a Jugantar worker, they contacted I.B. Sen, an important public figure and rented a house which could accommodate ten to twelve persons. This boarding house served "as a transit station where the released detenus could take their first shelter for a few days before departing for their native places."[14]

The released revolutionaries were suffering from a deep sense of indecision. They could not make up their minds about their future mode of work. Would they return to the old method of violence ? Or, should they explore new paths of struggle ? They now began to realise, as Bhupen Datta claims, that secret

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12 Ibid, p. 150.

13 Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, M.P. : In Search of Freedom, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1967, p. 134.

14 Arun Chandra Guha : Aurobindo and Jugantar, Calcutta, nd., p. 43.

organisations could not bring revolution in a country incapacitated by age-old inertness. One must work among the masses. But how to contact them - through the Congress ? They had reservations about it, as the Congress was to them merely an organisation for passing resolutions.[15] Bhupen Rakshit Roy, a revolutionary of that period, also claims to have realised by then that without the masses their fight for swaraj would always remain ineffective.[16] In the midst of such heart-searching, the revolutionaries found a glimmer of hope in the non-violent Non-Cooperation movement proposed at the Special Session of the Congress in Calcutta in September 1920.

The Jugantar workers awaiting release from the Hazaribag and the Rajsahi Central Jails decided to support and even join the movement after their release.[17] But they had their reservations about non-violence, the observance of which was being emphatically insisted upon by Gandhiji. They could not, however, overlook the mass character of the Gandhian movement. A handful of youngmen could set examples by their heroic deeds, might even stir up the conscience of the nation but certainly would not bring swaraj.[18]

Arun Guha, Suren Ghosh, Satkari Banerjee and other second-rank leaders of the Jugantar decided to lend support to Gandhiji.

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15 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : Biplaber Padachinha, p. 147.

16 Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy : Bharater Sasastra Biplab, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1970, p. 228.

17 Arun Chandra Guha : Arurobindo and Jugantar, p. 44.

18 Arun Chandra Guha : First Spark of Revolution, p.495.

But, as Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee and six other senior leaders were still absconding, the younger section hesitated to take the final decision on such a vital issue. However, during the Nagpur Congress of December 1920, an attempt was made on behalf of the Jugantar to secure the withdrawal of warrants against the seven absconders. Atul Ghosh and Bhupen Datta met and requested Madan Mohon Malaviya to use his good offices in this regard, but he simply declined when he came to know that each of them was carrying a reward on his head.[19] Then Bhupen Datta approached Gandhiji. He advised them to surrender all their arms and stay in his ashram at Sabarmati.[20] Next they approached Surendra Nath Banerjea who started dialogue with the government.[21] It was due to his intervention and perhaps also of Motilal Roy, a revolutionary of Chandernagore, that Atul Ghosh met the Chief Secretary of Bengal and the Chief of the Intelligence Branch. Ultimately the charges were withdrawn and the absconding seven came out of their hidings towards the end of 1921.[22]

How did the Jugantar look upon the Non-Cooperation movement? Manoranjan Gupta, Suren Ghosh and Hari Kumar Chakraborty authorised Bhupen Datta to meet Gandhiji at the Nagpur Session of the

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19 Amar Krishna Ghosh : interview with the author, Calcutta, September, 1975.

20 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : 'Biplabi Gandhi O Bharater Biplab Andolon'; op. cit. p. 202.

21 Amar Krishna Ghosh : interview with the author.

22 Ibid. Also Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : Biplabi Jibaner Smriti, pp. 454 - 55.

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Congress and to ascertain what exactly he meant by "Swaraj in one year" and whether this movement had any revolutionary potentiality[23]. Datta has left a detailed account of his long and protracted discussion with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji with clasped hands on his lap began :"the devoted sacrifice and sufferings you Bengalees have endured are beyond any parallel. I myself would not have dared"[24]. Datta told Gandhiji that his programme by itself would not make the country independent,but it would nevertheless raise the struggle to a revolutionary pitch. He gave Gandhiji the word of honour that during this period they would not resort to any violence and give Gandhiji's plan a trial. But he remained firm in his conviction that the nation would not be liberated without armed struggle.[25] Gandhiji replied that if the people took up the responsibility of administration, the British would have no moral right to rule the country.Datta replied that the British bothered little about any moral right as their rule in India was founded on brute physical force.[26] Though the debate ended in a stalemate,Datta promised to Gandhiji that his party would not resort to any act of violence during the next one year.[27]

On his return from Nagpur,Datta, at the request of his colleagues, went to Pondicherry to discuss with Aurobindo about

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23 Bhupendra Kumar Datta :'Biplabi Gandhi O Bharater Biplab Andolon', op.cit., p. 195.
24 Ibid., p. 197.
25 Ibid., pp. 200 - 201.
26 Ibid., p. 201.
27 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : Biplaber Padachinha,p.180.

their future course of action. On hearing the reports of Datta's discussion with Gandhiji, Aurobindo endorsed the stand taken by Datta and said that Gandhiji had come with a power; he would carry the nation much ahead.[28] He further advised Datta to ensure that the power likely to be released at Gandhiji's call might not disappear like flood-water. They should try to keep alive popular enthusiasm by organising a number of ashrams at different places which would supply fuel to future revolution.[29]

C.R. Das too, on his return to Calcutta from Nagpur, contacted the revolutionaries and persuaded them to join the Non-Cooperation movement. In the meantime, Gandhiji himself came down to Calcutta and made an exhaustive tour of Bengal to win over the province. In his paper he made an ardent appeal to the self-sacrificing Bengali youths :

"You have more imagination, more faith and more emotion than the rest of India. You have falsified the calumny of cowardice on more occasions than one. There is, therefore, no reason why Bengal should not lead us as it has done before." [30]

This appeal raised responsive echoes. Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, then in hiding, met Gandhiji (1921) and had a long conversation with him. Jadugopal stated that Gandhiji patted

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28 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : 'Biplabi Gandhi O Bharater Biplab Andolon', op. cit.,p. 204.

29 Ibid.

30 Young India, 29 January 1921.

him on his back and said,"if you have no faith in my path, please watch and see it. Do not create any obstruction in Bengal".[31] Jadugopal gave Gandhiji full assurance of active help.[32]

Having made up their mind, the Jugantar leaders left Calcutta for their respective districts. Suren Ghosh went to Mymensingh and Manoranjan Gupta to Barisal where the Santi Sena of Purna Das was already at work. Pratap Guha Roy, Satish Samanta and Purna Das were deputed for Midnapore; Bhupen Datta left for Khulna, Bhupati Majumder for Hooghly, Anil Baran Roy for Bankura and Surjya Sen for Chittagong. Thus the Jugantar stalwarts were placed in charge of different districts for organising the Non-Cooperation movement.[33]

According to the advice of Aurobindo, the Jugantar started setting up ashrams in different parts of Bengal -- Sankarmath in Barisal, Satyashram in Khulna, Vidyamandir in Uttarpara,Hooghly and Samyashram in Chittagong. These soon became the centres of the revolutionaries.[34]

Why did the Jugantar support Gandhiji's movement? The reasons were clearly stated by Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee in his memoirs. He stated that the word Swadhinata, so long chanted

31 Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : op. cit. p. 461.

32 Ibid

33 Arun Chandra Guha : Aurobindo and Jugantar,pp.46-47.

34 Bhupendra Kumar Datta:Biplaber Padochinha, p. 160.

like mantra (hymn) in secret, could now be uttered in public. The public whom the revolutionaries had tried to gather around them, could now be openly mustered.[35] Moreover, Gandhiji's words "Had India sword, I would have asked her to draw it. But as she has no sword, I ask her to adopt Non-violent Non-Cooperation"[36] --provided them with a sound logic for switching over from violence to non-violence. Moreover, the revolutionaries and Gandhiji had the same end in view, the end of the Raj.[37]

Pulin Das, the unquestioned leader[38] of the Anushilan, attended the Nagpur Session of the Congress along with C.R. Das and opposed the idea of Non-Cooperation.[39] After the Nagpur Session, Gandhiji came to Bengal and expressed his desire to meet Pulin Das. Pulin Das, accompanied by two prominent barristers, Subodh Roy and Himangshu Bose, met Gandhiji at the residence of C.R.Das. Pulin Das described this interview in detail in his autobiography. Gandhiji talked to him in secret and told him that either he would convert him (Pulin) to his ideas or he would accept those of Pulin.[40]

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35 Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : op. cit., p. 452.

36 Gandhiji's speeches, Quoted by Dr.Jadugopal, Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author, Calcutta, November-December, 1981.

39 Biplabi Pulin Das (Autobiography) ed.by Bhabatosh Roy, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1965, p. 260.

40 Ibid, p. 265.

The deliberations continued for three days. Gandhiji told Pulin Das that his movement had proved ineffective and insisted upon Pulin's acceptance of non-violence as the only and surest means to achieve independence. Pulin countered by saying that the government had no doubt been perturbed by the revolutionary movement : the partition of Bengal had been annulled, the reforms of 1919 had come and a promise of transfer of more powers had been made by the government. Gandhiji calmly argued that an attempt at revolution would bring war and cause the death and torture of thousands of people -- how could one support all these ?[41] Pulin retorted : "under the fetters of slavery, India is witnessing hundreds of such cruelties, innumerable people are dying from starvation and malnutrition, and poverty is on the increase. We began our revolution to achieve independence as a means to end all these shameful cruelties and killing." [42] He expressed his firm conviction that no country could achieve freedom without a revolutionary war. Gandhiji said in reply that if only the Indians could remain non-violent and make adequate sacrifices, the tyrants would be compelled to give independence. According to him, the real meaning of independence was spiritual freedom and if one could keep one's spirit free in spite of economic, political and social problems and physical torture, then alone could

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41 Ibid, p. 266 - 267.

42 Ibid, p. 268.

one be truly free. Pulin said that such spiritual freedom might delight a few sanyasis, but what he wanted was political and material freedom which other nations enjoyed. He did not think that Gandhiji's path would lead to such freedom. Suddenly, as reported by Pulin Das, Gandhiji lost his temper and the discussion came to an abrupt end.[43]

It is no easy task to explain precisely the stand taken by the Anushilan towards Gandhiji's movement. According to a veteran leader of the party, the Anushilan was no longer a well-knit organisation after the blow it had received during the First World War. In such a state of disarray, it was difficult for the Anushilan to take any collective stand for or against participation in the movement.[44] This argument seems to be valid and perhaps there was a sharp difference inside the party on this issue.This accounts for the participation of some of the members in the movement in spite of strong opposition from Pulin Das who exercised almost a dictatorial authority inside the party.

We may now pass on to discuss the role of some of leaders who participated in the Gandhian movement - Jogesh Chatterjee, a leading

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43 Ibid, pp. 269 - 271.

44 Dharani Goswami : interview with the author, Calcutta, December, 1981.

figure of the Anushilan, was convinced that the Non-Cooperation movement was not going to produce any "desired result". Yet he joined it "whole-heartedly" along with some of his friends "as it was launched on a mass scale".[45] Trailokya Chakraborty, another important leader of the party, could not overlook the revolutionary potentiality of the movement. To him, it was really a people's movement.[46] Naren Sen, second in command of the Anushilan, felt that the Gandhian technique was incapable of making India free; yet the Anushilan must utilise the Non-Cooperation movement to give the mass enthusiasm a revolutionary shape.[47] The government was fully aware of these new stirrings. According to an official report, the revolutionaries, though they ridiculed the idea of making any genuine headway through non-violence, seriously intended to utilise this opportunity for promoting the cause of an armed revolution.[48]

Satis Pakrasi, a young Anushilan militant who later on became a communist, recalled that the non-violent Non-Cooperation movement that was sweeping the country like a flood tide strongly attracted him. He along with his friends took active part in the work of the Barisal District Congress Committee. But when pressed to sign the pledge of non-violence, they left the Congress, as they

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45 Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee : op.cit., p. 161.

46 Trailokya Chakraborty : Jaile Tirish Bachhar, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1369 B.S., p. 109.

47 Jitesh Chandra Lahiri : Namami, 4th ed., Calcutta, 1378 B.S., p. 32.

48 Home (Pol) File 302/1923, Home (Pol) Dept., W. Bengal Secretariat.

CALCUTTA CENTRAL LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY CENTRAL LIBRARY

did not believe that non-violence alone could achieve swaraj.[49] Thus it can be presumed from all the available sources that, though the Anushilan leaders believed that attainment of swaraj within nine months by means of non-cooperation was a myth,[50] at last some of its prominent members decided to assist the movement for furthering their revolutionary enterprise[51]. Accordingly Naren Sen, Pratul Ganguly, Rabi Sen, Pravas Lahiri, Ashu Kahali and many other members, except Pulin Das, joined hands with Gandhiji[52]. The criticism of the Jugantar against the Anushilan that the latter opposed the movement and "placed workers in different districts of Bengal to work secretly against the Non-Cooperation movement"[53] thus appears to be inaccurate.

Pulin Das, however, took an anti-Gandhi stand after his fruitless talks with Gandhiji. He said, "Gandhi has turned the country into a land of coolies. Without armed uprising swaraj can never be won."[54] According to his own testimony, Pulin Das met S.R.Das, the then Standing Counsel of the Calcutta High Court and later on the Advocate General, at the latter's residence. S.R.Das proposed that as both of them were against the Gandhian movement,

49 Satis Pakrasi : Agnijuger Katha, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1378 B.S., pp. 144 - 145.

50 Prabhat Chakraborty: interview with the author, Calcutta, November, 1981.

51 Home (Pol) File 302/1923, Home (Pol) Dept., W.Bengal Secretariat.

52 Jitesh Chandra Lihiri : op.cit., p. 29.

53 Arun Chandra Guha : Aurobindo and Jugantar, p. 44.

54 Satis Pakrasi : op. cit., p. 144.

they should expose the loopholes of his movement by bringing out a journal and all the expenses of the paper would be borne by S.R.Das.[55] Pulin Das then brought out the Hak-katha (home truth). Nalini Kishore Guha, a "prolific writer" of the Anushilan, was entrusted with the editorial responsibilities. To campaign against Gandhiji, an organisation called the Bharat Sevak Sangha was set up simultaneously with the avowed object of social work.[56]

The paucity of evidence makes it difficult to say how many Anushilan workers gathered round Pulin Das in this task. A government report suggests that the followers of Pulin came mainly from east Bengal.[57] According to another report, Pulin Das wrote to his followers in the mofussil asking them not to commit any dacoity and added that "if you want to have the masses on your side try then to attain success through the ways laid down for the Sevak Sangha. If the masses get service from you, they will surely obey you in return."[58]

What did the Hak-Katha actually stand for? Some writers were of the opinion that the paper was financed by the government;[59]

55 Biplabi Pulin Das, p. 277

56 Ibid, p. 278

57 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.

58 Report on the Progress of the Non-Cooperation Movement and Labour Unrest, January-December, 1922, B.G.Press, 1923, p. 2.

59 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : In Search of Revolutionary Ideology and a Revolutionary Programme, A Study in the Transition from National Revolutionary Terrorism to Communism. New Delhi, 1979, p. 106.

some pilloried Pulin Das as an "agent of the government"[60]; and some papers like the Ananda Bazar Patrika ridiculed the Anushilan as "hooded snakes tamed by government money".[61] A prominent Jugantar leader accused the Hak-katha of making scrurrilous attacks against Non-Cooperation.[62] The publication of this journal and its alleged illicit relations with the authorities was discussed even on the floor of the Bengal Council. D.L. Khan wanted to know from the authorities whether the journal was actually financed by the government and whether it was distributed freely among the public. Wheeler's answers were extremely vague and evasive and doubts about the integrity of the journal remained unresolved.[63] The Home Member may have been deliberately vague in order to give Pulin Das a bad name.

Since then, the Hak-Katha has remained an object of political controversy. Was it indeed the mouthpiece of some renegades who had sold their souls to the enemy for a few pieces of silver? Or was it the organ of some genuine patriots who had honest differences with Gandhiji and others? What do available facts suggest ? They need to be properly assessed before one can possibly resolve this controversy.

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60 Biplabi Pulin Das, p. 278

61 Ibid

62 Arun Chandra Guha:Arurobindo and Jugantar, p.44.

63 Home (Pol) File 12C-106, Progs : 14-15, Nov.,1921, West Bengal State Archives (W.B.S.A.).

Original copies of the Hak-Katha could not be traced. Fortunately, the present author has been able to recover a reprint of its issues, published in the form of a booklet by one Kshitish Chandra Bandyopadhyay of 2 Ram Kanta Mistry Lane, Calcutta on 13 Falgun, 1328 B.S., corresponding to 26 February, 1922, that is, a fortnight after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement. The publisher's note, though frustratingly brief, together with the contents of the booklet permits one to draw a series of legitimate inferences. (1) The Hak-Katha did not publish any news items whatsoever; each issue of the journal contained just one long article-cum-editorial written in elegant Bengali prose in a very argumentative manner with some messianic aplomb. (2) The average size of the editorials would suggest that it was a two-page or four-page journal. The book itself ran into 101 pages containing thirteen issues of the Hak-Katha published between 20 June 1921 and 15 January 1922. The periodicity of publication was irregular; there were 13 issues in seven months. (3) The place of publication was not mentioned but it was presumably Calcutta. The names and addresses of the printer, publisher and editor were also kept secret. (4) The Hak-katha was published only during those eventful months when the Non-Cooperation movement was in full swing and went out of circulation after Chauri-chaura. (5) It is explicit from the publisher's note that the Hak-katha was distributed freely among the public with the sole object of propagating its views far and wide. The fact that a

reprint of the articles was brought out so soon after the demise of the journal lends support to the belief that the Hak-katha was able to build up a circle of readers, however, small, who appreciated its views. (6) The publisher's note is silent on whether the journal, though published illegally, was ever prosecuted by the government. Perhaps it was not, as the prompt reprint of its articles in a legal form would indicate.

These are all external evidence. Let us now examine, in some details, the internal evidence, i.e., the contents of the articles published in the Hak-Katha during its brief career. The editorials or the articles hardly substantiate the charges usually labelled against it. There is not a single instance of scurrilous attack against Gandhiji and the Non-Cooperation movement. Instead, there are several references wherein Gandhiji is held in high esteem. In different articles, he has been hailed as the Mahatma whose sacrifice is peerless,[64] as a great man worthy of being worshipped by the people,[65] as noble-hearted[66] and as a promoter of peace and equality.[67] Glowing tribute was also paid to C.R.Das.His sacrifice, wrote the Hak-Katha, had hardly any parallel whether in Bengal or in any other province of India.[68]

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64 Hak-Katha, Calcutta, 20 June 1921, p. 3.

65 Ibid, p. 5.

66 Ibid, p. 4.

67 Ibid, 17 September, 1921, p. 50

68 Ibid, 7th December 1921, p. 76.

The Hak-Katha had no doubt sharp political differences with Gandhiji and was certainly critical of his means of attaining Swaraj. But these were honest differences which were frankly expressed without any touch of malice. Its language was surely polemical but was never indecorous, far less abusive. This is how it criticised the Non-Cooperation movement:

"Plying of Charka, establishment of a few schools here and there, sacrifice of legal practice by a few among millions, occasional organisation of countrywide hartals and above all, exemplary personal sacrifice by a handful of leaders have no doubt promoted a state of excitement and emotional upsurge ... but no signs are yet visible to suggest that just because of these developments, the British government would be paralysed and be compelled to hand over swaraj to us within the next three months. In short, we are not destroying sufficiently enough, even though we have chosen the path of destruction so as to compel the British government to grant us swaraj. And the final outcome of destruction is blood-bath from which we must refrain ... hence we must turn our attention to construction."[69]

The Hak-Katha also accused the supporters of the Non-Cooperation movement of growing intolerance towards those who held different views :

"If you are so certain that non-cooperation alone can bring

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69 Ibid, 23 July 1921, pp. 24 - 25.

about India's emancipation and that the people are with you, then why do you cry 'shame' to those whose viewpoint does not agree with yours ... but look at Mahatma Gandhi, he does not shrink from showing respect and honour to those who hold contrary opinions."[70]

In another issue it wrote : "we are amazed at the fact that those who are supposed to build up a great movement throughout the country are capable of giving vent to such hatred, malice, meanness and calumny. The need for the present movement would not have arisen at all if only we could work more and talk less."[71]

The Hak-Katha was forthright enough to accuse the followers of Gandhiji of dishonesty and disloyalty to the cause they espoused. While the leaders in open repudiation of the ideals of the movement courted arrest and then came out of prison under bail, the ordinary volunteers continued to rot in prisons.[72] It also expressed misgivings about proper utilisation of the huge amount of money raised in the name of Tilak Swaraj Fund.[73] No less sharply did it criticise the growing ambivalence that was overtaking the movement : "Unless we shape ourselves as right kind of man can Mahatma Gandhi possibly bring swaraj out of the blue? In a movement that depends

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70 Ibid, 24 June 1921, p. 11.
71 Ibid, 16 August 1921, p. 37
72 Ibid, p. 41.
73. Ibid, 17 September 1921, p. 44
74 Ibid, 16 August 1921, p. 42.

exclusively on moral force and on integrity of character, how can one achieve success if the nation is not roused by men of noble character and determination ?" [74]

As regards the different means of achieving swaraj, the Hak-katha stated unequivocally that there were three and only three paths open before the country : one, the path of violent struggle; two, the path of continuous mass agitation so as to bring sufficient pressure on the government with a view to arriving at a profitable compromise with it; three, the path of national regeneration from within by dint of rigorous self-help. The Hak-katha, as is evident from its repeated assertions, was an advocate of the third path. It wrote : "one way of winning swaraj is to defeat the English by physical force, by means of military might; but this is the path of revolution, of blood-bath ... and is not the path of non-violent non-cooperator Mahatma Gandhi; rather it is the path of De Valera. There is a second path - the path of creating such a political atmosphere by continuous movement that a profitable compromise with the government can be achieved. The present day non-cooperators are, as a party, the followers of this second path."[75] The third path was the path of laying the secure foundation for swaraj by awakening the forces that were dormant in the nation. "If, in order to lay that foundation", wrote the Hak-katha,

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74 Ibid, 16 August 1921, p. 42.

75 Ibid, 7 August 1921, p. 30.

"it is necessary to acquire military training and join the military profession, we shall surely do it ... if again it is necessary to enter the Council, we shall enter it; we shall go wherever it is necessary to go. We shall do whatever it is necessary to do in order to make the nation worthy of swaraj. Non-cooperation or cooperation cannot be our creed -- it is only a means to our end, the end being the achievement of swaraj ..."[76] Again, "Swaraj cannot be purchased in the world market by incompetence. That is why we say : whether you are a co-operator or a non-cooperator, acquire strength, build up the nation, train up active, bold, persevering,disciplined, courageous and completely self-reliant patriots -- only then will the basis for swaraj be truly laid."[77]

The Hak-Katha did not deny the positive role of the Non-cooperation movement in rousing national feelings to a revolutionary pitch but it had little faith in its leaders who were wavering and were afraid of going to the extent of revolution.[78] So it appealed to the militant youths of Bengal in the following manner :

"It is you who have always showed the country the path of real progress, the nameless, fameless path of genuine sacrifice.

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76 Ibid, pp. 32 - 33.
77 Ibid, July 1921, pp. 19 - 20.
78 Ibid, 7 December 1921, pp. 82 - 83.

Stand up as staunch individuals ... nobody can bring swaraj from the sky within a couple of days; do not cherish any such hope. Do not allow the newly awakened power of this vast sleeping nation to be frittered away ... do not permit falsehood to masquerade as truth being lured by the hope of making people rich overnight ... you must secure fully what you have not yet secured, you must become what you should become. That transformation is swaraj".[79]

It is difficult to regard the Hak-katha as a mouthpiece of traitors. It did not prevaricate on the issue of swaraj which it regarded as the nation's birth-right. Since the demand for swaraj could now be raised publicly, there was no longer any need, it argued, to form secret societies.[80] But what kind of swaraj did the Hak-Katha advocate ? It did not want the spiritual swaraj of the Upanishads. It wanted material, political swaraj for the thirty crores of Indians, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.[81]

The position taken by the Hak-Katha on other important issues of the day, can, by no stretch of imagination, be regarded as anti-national. It expressed its deep sympathy for the striking

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79 Ibid, 20 November 1921, p. 75

80 Ibid, 9 July 1921, p. 14.

81 Ibid, pp. 15 - 16.

workers of Assam tea-gardens, then assembled at Chandpur in east Bengal.[82] On the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, it wrote : "With a feeling of distress which rends one's heart, we have realised that we cannot survive without Hindu-Muslim unity ... and patriotism alone can bring about the unity"[83]

Instead of holding any brief for the Montford Reforms, the Hak-Katha criticised it in no uncertain terms. It apprehended that the new constitutional provisions would only lend support to the divisive forces within the nation and set the stage for the triumph of the official policy of divide and rule.[84] By encouraging fresh divisions at communal and caste-levels, they would, in the long run, weaken India as a nation.[85] The Hak-Katha entertained no illusion about the effectiveness of Congress-Khilafat unity even though it was then sweeping the country from end to end. That unity, the Hak-Katha feared, would be unproductive as it was based on negative factors alone and involved no meeting of minds.[86]

Though there is no explicit denunciation of British rule in the Hak-Katha, there is not a single sentence either in any of its articles which can even be remotely construed as an apology for the Raj. It repeatedly laid stress on moral regeneration from the grass-root level in order to make swaraj meaningful for the masses.

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82 Ibid, 20 June, p. 7.
83 Ibid, 1 October 1921, p. 54.
84 Ibid, p. 57.
85 Ibid
86 Ibid, p. 56.

Without such regeneration, swaraj would mean nothing more than a mere replacement of "white bureaucracy" by a brown bureaucracy"[87].

One may or may not agree with the views expressed in the Hak-Katha on some of the burning issues of the time, but one must concede that it expressed its views freely and frankly and was not afraid of swimming against the tide. Its criticism of national leadership was often very sharp but was not marked by malice or frivolity. Its basic political outlook was highly controversial, even heretical, but surely not treacherous.

Pulin Das, as already mentioned, claimed to have brought out the Hak-Katha with financial assistance from S.R.Das. Later on, some important members of both the Jugantar[88] and the Anushilan[89] confirmed this piece of information, presumably on the sole basis of what Das himself had stated, since they did not adduce any new evidence in support of his alleged claim. It was also suggested that the Hak-Katha was published as the organ of the Bharat Sevak Sangha[90], an organisation launched by Das himself to carry on social reform work.

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87 Ibid, 17 September 1921, p. 50.

88 Arun Chandra Guha : Aurobindo and Jugantar, p. 44.

89 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op. cit., p. 106.

90 Jitesh Chandra Lahiri : op. cit., p. 30.

The name of Pulin Das does not, however, occur in the Hak-Katha even for onee whether as its proprietor or publisher or printer or editor or even as a public figure of any consequence. Nowhere in the Hak-Katha was it even remotely hinted that it was the mouth piece of any organisation. There is not a single reference to the Bharat Sevak Samgha in any of the editions of the Hak-Katha. On the other hand, the Hak-Katha stated repeatedly that it did not echo the voice of any individual or any institution, that it spoke for the entire nation, that is, for the national cause as it understood it. It is therefore difficult to reconcile these two disparate sets of evidence. Either Das's claim was baseless or he who paid the piper failed to call the tune.

Opposition against Pulin Das was however steadily building up inside the Anushilan because of his vain, dictatorial mode of leadership, his total opposition to the Non-Cooperation movement,[91] and his allegedly dubious deals with the government. The storm burst into the open during the Gaya Congress (1922) when Naren Sen, Pratul Ganguli, Ramesh Acharya and Ramesh Chaudhuri mustered their courage and repudiated Pulin's leadership and severed all connections with him. Pulin Das, a lone figure, was forced to retire from politics and his Samgha ceased to exist.[92]

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91 Satis Pakrasi : op. cit., p. 144.

92 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op. cit., p. 107.

Chapter II

BENGAL REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE SWARAJYA PARTY

1923-1925

Soon after Gandhiji called off his Non-Cooperation movement, a fierce debate started within the ranks of the Congress about the future course of action. C.R.Das, Motilal Nehru and others had never been keen supporters of Council boycott. C.R.Das issued a manifesto where he said that "to wreck the Council from within" should be the future course of his action.

The issue was taken up in the Gaya Congress in December 1922. C.R. Das put forward his new tactical line of "uniform, consistent and continuous obstruction", but failed to carry even the majority of Bengal delegates with him. On 1 January 1923 he resigned from the Presidentiship of the Congress and with Motilal Nehru and others formed a party, named Congress-Swaraj Party which favoured Council entry. This new party did not secede from the Congress but worked hard to convert their minority into a majority.[1]

C. R. Das returned from Gaya in a disturbed state of mind. The Bengal Congress was sharply divided on the question of entry into the Councils. It was then in the hands of the "no-changers".

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1 The Indian Annual Register, Vol. II, 1923, Calcutta, p. 143.

To turn the tide of Bengal politics, C.R. Das contacted the Bengal revolutionaries, especially those who belonged to the Jugantar. He knew how the Jugantar workers had effectively organised the Non-Cooperation movement in almost all the Bengal districts. Subhas Chandra Bose, one of his trusted lieutenants, contacted the Jugantar on his behalf and asked for their whole-hearted support. Bhupen Datta has written that Subhas met Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, who had just emerged from underground, with a full list of district units showing which were in favour of C.R. Das and which were against him. The list showed that if only Suren Ghosh of Mymensingh, Manoranjan Gupta of Barisal and Bhupati Majumder of Hooghly lent their support in favour of Council entry, C.R.Das could win over the Bengal Congress to his point of views.After contacting the rank and file of the respective districts Dr. Mukherjee, Ghosh and Majumder decided to support C.R. Das.[2]

The police kept a close watch on these developments. According to an intelligent report, C.R. Das had decided to co-operate with the Bengal revolutionaries so long as they abstained from overt acts of violence and as soon as they resumed their revolutionary activities, the Swarajya Party would stand aside

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2 Bhupendra Kumar Datta : Biplaber Pada Chinha, p. 161.

and would not interfere.[3] It was also reported that C.R. Das had entered into an agreement with Upen Banerjee and Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay that both of them would take up the cause of the Swarajya Party, provided that it did not interfere with the policy and work of the revolutionaries.[4]

C.R. Das not only rallied most of the erstwhile non-cooperators of Bengal to his side but also persuaded large sections of Bengal revolutionaries to support his programme. They were undaunted fighters for freedom and C.R.Das knew it. So it was tacitly agreed that C.R. Das and his party would give them benevolent support, a legal cover and would also fight for their release; the revolutionaries too, in return, would enter the Congress, run the Congress machinery at all levels and popularise Swarajist programme. They would, however, be free at the same time to carry on their illegal revolutionary activities.[5] C.R. Das, as reported byDr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, requested them not to undertake any act of violence at least for one year. The revolutionaries met secretly at Cherry Press, Bowbazar, Calcutta and decided to honour the request of C.R. Das.[6]

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3 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.

4 Ibid.

5 Home (Pol) File 103/3/1922, W.B.S.A.

6 Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : op. cit., p. 497.

What was the stand of the Anushilan ? The Anushilan, being a hierarchical party, took some time to make up its mind. One of its leaders, Purnananda Das Gupta, said that since the inception of the Swarajya Party, the Anushilan decided to support C. R. Das as it considered the Swarajists to be more dynamic than the Gandhian non-cooperators.[7] He further said that Pratul Ganguly of Dacca, Jnan Majumder of Mymensingh and others worked strenuously within the Swarajya Party.[8] This is corroborated by Satis Pakrasi in his book wherein he wrote that both the Anushilan and the Jugantar joined hands with the Swarajya Party.[9] According to an official report, Trailokya Chakraborty and Madan Bhowmick of the Anushilan were members of the inner circle of the Swarajya Party which financed their activities.[10]

Anyway, it is evident that after the Gaya Congress,C.R.Das and his party established effective links with the Bengal revolutionaries.In February 1923,C.R.Das appointed revolutionaries like Upen Banerjee and Manmohon Bhattacharya of the Jugantar to the publicity board of his party. On the propaganda board, he appointed Satyen Mitra, Basanta Chakraborty and Nagen Guha Roy of the Jugantar and Pulin Das of the Anushilan.The Swarajya Party

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7 Purnananda Das Gupta : interview with the author, Calcutta, October 1976.
8 Ibid.
9 Satis Pakrasi : op.cit., p. 16.
10 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.
11 Ibid.

brought out two newspapers - the Forward and the Swadesh managed by Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya and Manmohan Bhattacharya. The cause of the party was propagated by the two revolutionary journals, already in existence, viz., the Atmasakti and the Bijali.[12]

According to an intelligence report, these two papers were printed at Cherry press, Bowbazar, Calcutta and this building was regularly used by the revolutionaries as their conclave and also as "headquarters of the Swarajya Party and was used as such until C.R.Das captured the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee"[13]. Another police report said that C.R. Das was supported by the revolutionaries without whose help he could never have won his victory for Council entry over the no-changers. C.R. Das was aware that his revolutionary allies were engaged in conspiratorial activities but he connived at them. This was the price he had to pay to secure their support for the coming elections.[14] The police also claimed to have evidence that the revolutionaries were liberally financed by the Swarajya Party treasury and hence were able to concentrate more on murders and less on robbery.[15]

At the end of February 1923, the A.I.C.C. meeting was held in Allahabad to consider the split in the Bengal Congress. At this Congress, C.R.Das's party was represented,among others,by some

12 Manmohon Bhattacharya : interview with the author, Rahara, Kharda, 24 Parganas, December, 1979.

13 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.

14 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1932, N.A.I.

15 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.

well-known revolutionary figures like Satyen Mitra, Pulin Das, Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, Satish Singha and Sachin Sanyal. It was decided in the Congress that neither faction would obstruct the other till April 1923; the matter would be decided in the next session of the A.I.C.C., scheduled to be held in Bombay by May 1923.[16]

The Bombay Congress, by a majority of votes, permitted the Swarajya Party to carry out its programme. But the B.P.C.C. where the no-changers were still in majority, passed a resolution disapproving the Bombay decision. It refused to hand over office to the Swarajya Party. That was in June 1923. This led to a clash in a B.P.C.C. meeting in Calcutta in August 1923, when the Swarajya Party with the active help of the revolutionaries held the meeting. Although Bhupati Majumder was elected secretary, he could not take possession of the office due to opposition from the no-changers. Each of the factions wired to the A.I.C.C. for an intervention in its favour.[17] The issue, as the central leadership decided, was to be settled in the ensuing Delhi Congress.

In the meantime, Shyam Sundar Chakraborty, leader of the no-changers in Bengal, met Jadugopal and requested him not to support C.R. Das. What transpired in that meeting is known from

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16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

Jadugopal's own words : "Shyam Sundar Chakraborty said,'you are revolutionaries. Council is an object of hatred to you. Independence cannot come through Council. Chitta has led you astray'". In reply Jadugopal said, ".... revolution is all pervasive...I am always in favour of snatching away freedom. But at present we have no means which are absolutely required to snatch away Swaraj. The path that Deshbandhu has followed may bring graduai transfer of power. He has not given up non-cooperation, he has only entered the Council."[18]

Anyway, C.R. Das continued to consolidate his position in Bengal districts and asked his followers to send as many delegates, including the revolutionaries, as possible to the Delhi Congress. He himself bore all the travelling expenses.[19] The Delhi Congress held in September 1923, gave its decision in favour of C. R. Das. Thus by the third quarter of 1923, C.R. Das, with the active cooperation of the revolutionaries succeeded in capturing the Bengal Congress. Maulana Akram Khan, a Khilafatist leader,become its President and Bhupati Majumder became the secretary of the organisation.[20]

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18 Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : op.cit., p. 485.

19 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, July - December, 1923,B.G.Press,1926,p.5.

20 Gautam Chattopadhyay : Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle, 1862 - 1947, New Delhi,1984, pp. 72 - 73.

Shortly after the return of the Bengal delegates from Delhi, a large number of revolutionaries were apprehended on alleged ground of complicity in a plot to assassinate certain police officers. Among those arrested were Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, Bhupen Datta, Jyotish Ghosh, Manoranjan Gupta, Bhupati Majumder, Manmohon Bhattacharya, Jiban Lal Chatterjee. Almost all of them were Jugantar leaders. They were detained under Regulation III of 1818[21]. A warrant of arrest was also issued against [illegible] Bepin Ganguly of the Atmonnoti Samiti but he absconded. Of the Anushilan leaders, Satis Pakrasi was arrested. Naren Sen of Dacca Anushilan went underground.Amrit Lal Sarkar,Rabi Sen and Atin Roy, the Anushilan district leaders, were arrested.[22]

As was expected, the nationalist press protested against these large-scale arrests. The arrests gave rise to a wide spread rumour in and around Calcutta that the government wanted to destroy the Swarajya Party in Bengal.[23] Only The Englishman wholeheartedly supported this onslaught.[24] A protest meeting was held in Calcutta on 8 October 1923 with Byomkesh Chakraborty, a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, in the chair and it was attended mostly by students.[25]

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21 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924 NAI

22 Prabhat Chakraborty :interview with the author.

23 Report on Newspapers and Periodicals in Bengal, July-December, 1923, p. 915.

24 The Englishman, 5 October 1923; Ibid, p. 947.

25 Fortnightly Reportson the Political situation in Bengal,July-December, 1923, p. 11.

An official report observed that these arrests in fact deprived C. R. Das of some of his influential campaigners in the forthcoming election. Yet he remained strangely silent on this occasion. This silence was interpreted in the above report as an attempt on his part not to emphasise in public the close connection which existed between himself and those who had been arrested.[26]

C.R. Das's silence, however, caused considerable disappointment among the revolutionaries still at large. It is on record that Anil Baran Roy was heckled on this issue in a meeting of the revolutionaries. He was compelled to admit that without their support C.R.Das would not have attained such an enviable position as he then occupied. Roy tactfully faced the ordeal and persuaded them to remain loyal to the Swarajist cause until the Council elections were over.[27]

Let us now refer to the electroal battles of 1923. C.R.Das coined a crisp and concise slogan for his party : "Our aim is not this or that reform, our aim is Swaraj".[28] In his vigorous election campaign he was supported by the revolutionaries. The cardinal point of his election speech was : "the reforms are mere moonshine. They mean nothing. I want to expose them and wreck them."[29] Whatever might

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26 Ibid.

27 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924,N.A.I.

28 Gautam Chattopadhyay, Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle, p. 76.

29 C.R.Das's Election Speeches, quoted by Dr.Naresh Chandra Ghosh : Chittajayee Chittaranjan,1st ed.,Calcutta, 1379 B.S., p. 245.

have been the arguments for and against the Council entry, the Swarajists won a thumping victory over the moderates.

Among the members of the Bengal Council returned on the ticket of the Swarajya party, there were two ex-detenus, Satyen Mitra and Nagen Guha Roy, both from constituencies in the Noakhali districts. Anil Baran Roy was also elected. According to a police report, he "had for sometime been a violent agitator with pronounced revolutionary sympathy".[30]

The increasing influence of the revolutionaries was clearly evident in the reconstitution of the B.P.C.C., now under full control of the Swarajya Party. Suren Ghosh and Satish Chakraborty were elected as representatives to the A.I.C.C. in place of Upen Banerjee and Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay who were then in jail. Satish Chakraborty was appointed secretary of the B.P.C.C. in place of Bhupati Majumder who had been detained under Regulation III.[31]

The Swarajya Party in a meeting on 16 December 1923, decided to decline the gubernatorial offer of accepting the office. The party demands to be raised on the floor of the Council included, inter alia, the repeal of "repressive laws", complete provincial autonomy and immediate release of all political prisoners.

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30 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924 N.A.I.

31 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, July-December, 1923, p. 19.

If these demands were not conceded, the grant of supplies, it was decided, would be voted down and the administration would face a deadlock.[32] The demands for the repeal of repressive laws and the release of political prisoners were a sure indicator of the growing influence of the revolutionaries inside the Swarajya Party.

C.R.Das also realised the importance of winning over the Muslims to his camp, because without their support, he could create no constitutional deadlock in the Bengal Council. Hence he drew up a plan for Hindu-Muslim unity in Bengal. This came to be known as the Bengal Pact, 16 December 1923. It provided that representation in the Bengal Legislative Council would be through joint electorates on the basis of population. It also resolved that special weightage would be given to the Muslims till they made up their deficiencies in services and attained a proportion commensurate with their numbers. Music before mosques or slaughter of cows would be banned as these would hurt the feelings of either community.[33]

A big section of the nationalist Congressmen and Swarajists opposed the Bengal Pact bitterly. Even the A.I.C.C. session at Cocanada (25 December 1923) summarily rejected the Bengal Pact. The denunciation of the Pact embittered the Muslims.They warned the

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32 Ibid.

33 Hemendra Nath Das Gupta : Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, 1st ed., New Delhi, 1960, p. 101.

Hindus that any attempt to evade the commitments would lead to "unpleasant and unforeseen development."[34] The warning was prophetic.The attitude of the revolutionaries towards the Bengal Pact will be examined later on.

As soon as the Council met on 24 January 1924, the Swarajists took up the cause of the state prisoners, demanding immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners detained under Regulation III of 1818. Hussan Surhawardy, a Swarajist, delivered a forceful speech in support of the resolution.[35] Sarat Bose, elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose and a Swarajist, supported the motion. He said that detention without trial was the denial of justice which caused more disaffection in the country than all other causes taken together.[36] The Swarajists,independent nationalists and a section of the independent Muslims voted for the motion and the government was defeated. The Swarajist camp was jubilant -- "the Government would either be forced to release the revolutionary prisoners or risk turning a majority decision of the Council into a mockery. Either way, it would be a triumph for Swarajist tactics".[37] Though the government remained firm in its

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34 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, January - June, 1924, 1926, B.G. Press,p.3.
35 Proceedings, Bengal Legislative Council,24 January, 1924, Vol. XIV, No.I, p. 78.
36 Ibid., p. 80.
37 Gautam Chattopadhyay : Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle, p. 78.

obstinacy and the political prisoners were not released, the police commented that "these resolutions re-established Mr. Das in favour of revolutionists".[38]

Soon after its victory in the Council elections, the Swarajya Party won the Calcutta Corporation elections in March 1924. C.R.Das was elected Mayor and a young Bengali, not yet well-known to the public, Subhas Chandra Bose, became the Chief Executive Officer. The British Intelligence reported that in 1924, the revolutionary members of the Swarajya Party supported the candidature of Subhas Chandra Bose and it was noteworthy that after his appointment to the post, many jobs in the Corporation were given to them.[39] The role of the revolutionaries in the Calcutta Corporation would be discussed at some length in Chapter IV.

Close on the heels of these electoral victories, C.R.Das launched another movement in April 1924 - the Tarakeswar Satyagraha movement to dislodge the corrupt and immoral Mohunta of Tarakeswar, Hooghly. C.R. Das's close friend and biographer, Hemendra Nath Das Gupta, wrote that at his call, hundreds of young men suffered

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38 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.

39 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1924, N.A.I.

imprisonment.[40] This movement was mainly conducted by the Jugantar workers under the leadership of Suren Ghosh and some stray members of the Anushilan.[41]

It has already been discussed how the Bengal Pact was attacked from different sides. C.R.Das was challenged to get it endorsed by an open conference of the B.P.C.C. He accepted the challenge and the trial of strength took place in June 1924, at Serajgunj in north Bengal at the Provincial Political Conference. A stormy debate ensued over the Pact. Urging for acceptance of the Pact, C.R. Das passionately declared that as long as the Hindus and Muslims did not unite, the dream of Swaraj would ever remain a slogan, and would never be transformed into a reality.The critics were silenced by his eloquent speech and the Pact was endorsed by a huge majority.[42] In securing this majority, C.R.Das was actively and effectively supported by the Bengal revolutionaries.

The next resolution paying homage to the martyrdom of Gopinath Saha, who was hanged for killing a British officer, Mr. Day, was moved by Srish Chatterjee, an important member of Dacca Anushilan. He said that though the Congress adopted the policy of non-violence, yet the act of Gopinath was inspired by a noble idea, viz., to get rid of the enemies of the country. He was not

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40 Hemendra Nath Das Gupta : op.cit., p. 105.

41 Purnananda Das Gupta ; interview with the author.

42 The Indian Annual Register, January-June,Vol.I, 1924 Calcutta, p. 670.

praising Gopinath's act but his object.[43] The actual text of the resolution as recorded by the police was as follows :

"Although eschewing all kinds of violence and accepting the true character of the basic principle of non-violence, this conference realizes the high and noble ideal of Gopinath Saha and makes known its respect for the noble self-sacrifice he has made for the preservation of the interest of the motherland."[44]

How can one explain the fact that C.R. Das allowed such a resolution to be passed in a Party Conference which professed loyalty to the creed of non-violence? According to a government report, the Bengal revolutionaries forced C.R. Das to lend his support to the resolution on Gopinath Saha in return for their support for his Bengal Pact.45.

After a protest from Gandhiji and others as the resolution was not in tune with the Congress policy of non-violence, C.R.Das had to perform a balancing trick. The actual difference, however, between the text finally published in his paper, the Forward, on 8 June 1924 and the original text approved by the Serajganj conference lay simply in the addition of a phrase "misguided though he was"[46].

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43 Ibid, p, 669.

44 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1923-24, Calcutta, 1925, p. vi.

45 Home (Pol) File 45/1/1933, N.A.I.

46 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1923-24; p.vi.

The British official circles regarded this change in the original text as negligible and felt that the resolution, even in its slightly modified form would give impetus to the "terrorist organisations"[47]. Whatever might have been the reasons behind the publication of a modified version of the resolution, the episode registered the high watermark of C.R. Das's active collaboration with the revolutionaries. It can be presumed that C.R. Das, since then, was perhaps thinking in terms of coming to an understanding with the government. In his revised scale of priorities, collaboration with the revolutionaries now seemed least important. Hemanta Sarkar, one of the lieutenants of C.R.Das, wrote :"I heard that Mr. Viellers, the president of the European Association, met C.R.Das and requested him that if C.R.Das made a slight change in the resolution eulogising Gopinath, Lord Lytton might agree to hand over the charge of administration to him according to the Devolution Rules, Government of India Act."[48] C.R.Das's line of thinking at that time is also evident from the following fact. A Swarajist Conference was held in Calcutta on 16 and 17 August 1924, in which all the prominent leaders of the country were present. There the constitution of the party was discussed threadbare. In the second para of the constitution it was written that "the object of the party was the attainment of Swaraj ... by all

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47 Ibid.

48 Hementa Sarkar : Subhaser Sange Baro Bachar, Calcutta, 1949. p. 145.

legitimate and peaceful means." This was objected to by Srish Chatterjee, who proposed that the word Swaraj be replaced by "complete Independence" and the words "by all legitimate and peaceful means" be deleted. But the proposal was eventually over-ruled by C. R. Das who held that in the definition of Swaraj he could not go beyond the tenets of the Congress of which his party was a branch.[49]

C.R. Das must have been worried by the resumption of revolutionary activities. He and other Swarajya leaders apprehended that the government had sufficient grounds to take strong steps against the revolutionaries in the event of any commission of violence. He even realised that, as many of the important revolutionary leaders were important members of his party, any action taken against them might have an injurious effect on the Swarajya organisation. Moreover, the period was critical for him as the vote for the ministers' salaries, which he was determined to defeat, was pending at the session of the Bengal Council on 26 August 1924 and the Belgaum Congress which was to decide the future of his party vis-a-vis the Congress, was yet to come. So C.R. Das wanted to restrain his revolutionary friends, and on 10 July 1924, in a secret meeting held in Calcutta, he persuaded them not to resort

49 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, July - December, 1924; B.G. Press, 1926, p.6.

to any act of violence for the present. His proposal met with stiff opposition and "strenuous efforts were made from some quarters to get him agree to make an exception to the assassination of Tegart," the then Police Commissioner, Calcutta.[50] The meeting broke up inconclusively. However, C.R. Das succeeded in securing the unwilling consent of his Jugantar friends but that too for a brief period, as the future was to show.

The Anushilan did not attend the meeting, as it had never entered into any definite agreement with C.R.Das. It continued to strike out on its own, mainly in east Bengal. As it had no access "to the same financial resources as the Jugantar", it engaged itself in forging currency notes.[51] The police had information that sometime in June, the Anushilan was conspiring to assassinate Inspector Basanta Majumder and certain other police officers.[52]

In the meantime, C.R. Das's relations with the Jugantar too were being subjected to increasing strains. The junior members of the Jugantar, who had begun to associate themselves with the recently formed New Violence Party, were becoming restive and tried to disturb the peaceful atmosphere by attempting to assassinate police officers and by publishing the Red Bengal leaflets.[53]

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50 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924 N.A.I.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid. The Red Bengal leaflets were published by the New Violence Party,not by the Jugantar,See Ch.III,p.77.

By the middle of August 1924, the Jugantar leaders also cast aside all pretence of abiding by C.R.Das's request. The police claimed to have information that on 15 August a secret meeting was held at the office of the Swarajya Party in Calcutta in presence of Satyen Mitra, Subhas Chandra Bose, Suren Ghosh, Amar Ghosh, Hari Kumar Chakraborty and several other revolutionary leaders. In spite of a stiff opposition ffom C.R. Das, Subhas Chandra Bose and Suren Ghosh, it was resolved in this meeting that an attack would be made on the life of Lord Lytton for having cast a slur on Indian womanhood in his speech at Dacca in 1924.[54] The same source subsequently reported that Suren Ghosh changed his mind and the idea of assassinating Lord Lytton, the then Governor of Bengal proved to be tempting to him as this act would make a tremendous impact on the young militants of his party. He met the Mymensingh groups on 19 August and proposed that the attempt on Lord Lytton should be made with a bomb in the mofussil area or during his journey by train. The atmosphere grew tense as on 22 August 1924 a bomb was hurled at a suspected police agent on Mirjapur Street in Calcutta.[55]

All these incidents worried C.R. Das considerably and in a press interview he opened his mind. He admitted that a serious anarchist movement existed in the country, the nature of which the

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54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

authorities did not realise. Secondly, he warned the authorities that if the Swarajist movement failed, this menace would go to such a length that no amount of repression would cope with it.[56] It was obviously a sort of pressure on the government for coming to an honourable settlement with him.

In view of the situation, the Government of Bengal wrote a series of letters to the Government of India for special legislation, pointing out that Regulation III was inadequate to deal with a "widespread conspiracy"[57]. By September 1924 the situation took a more serious turn. The police reported that the revolutionaries had broken away from C.R. Das and were determined to gain their ends by violence. Moreover, the Bolshevik agents had been active presaging greater troubles.[58] After prolonged deliberations, the Government of India promulgated an Ordinance on 25 October 1924. In a sudden swoop, 59 persons were arrested in a single day(25 October) and 18 others were arrested partly under the Ordinance and partly under Regulation III. Gradually the number of arrests rose to 46 under the Ordinance and 65 under Regulation III.[59] Subhas Chandra Bose, Satyen Mitra, and Anil Baran Roy - the three trusted lieutenants of C.R. Das, were apprehended; all the stalwarts of the Jugantar, and the Anushilan were detained without trial in different

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56 Forward, 31 August, 1924.

57 Home (Pol) File 4/41/1932 N.A.I.

58 Ibid.

59 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, July - December, 1924, p. 11.

jails of India. The police carried out indiscriminate raids, mainly in Congress offices, in the office of the Swarajya Party, the Satyagraha office and took all the documents and books belonging to the Swarajya Party and even Corporation files from the house of Subhas Chandra Bose.[60]

A surge of protest swept from one end of India to the other against this notorious ordinance. There was no party in India which did not condemn this "perversion of law simply to break the Swarajists who were, by extreme use of constitution, breaking up Government after Government in the provinces, and holding up to ridicule the worthlessness of the Reformed Constitution."[61] Thousands of protest meetings were held all over the country. Men like S.N.Sastri, M.A. Jinnah, P.C.Roy, Nilratan Sarkar(who were opposed to the Swarajists) were unanimous in condemning the repression.[62] The Calcutta Corporation in a special meeting on 29 October passed a resolution condemning the Ordinance and demanding the release of Subhas Chandra Bose. C.R. Das made an eloquent speech : "If the love of the country is a crime, I am a criminal. If Subhas is a criminal, I am a criminal".[63]

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60 The Indian Quarterly Register, July - December, Vol. II, 1924, p. 160.

61 Ibid, p. 174.

62 Ibid.

63 C.R. Das : Speech, 29 October 1924, Quoted by Dr.Naresh Chandra Ghosh, op.cit, p.284.

But the police claimed to have information that this sudden arrest of the revolutionaries created a misunderstanding between C.R. Das and the Bengal revolutionaries. In a meeting of the B.P.C.C. at Albert Hall on 5 November, the revolutionaries strongly resented C. R. Das's press statement wherein he had admitted that a revolutionary movement existed in Bengal as this statement had strengthened the government's case for the promulgation of the Ordinance. When C.R.Das tried to justify his stand, the revolutionaries literally shouted him down. They were eager, according to the police, tc take control of the party fund and the Congress machine with a view to utilising them in the interest of revolutionary actions.[64]

The police also repcrted that "the breach, however, was temporary". A few days later some revolutionaries, Suresh Das, Jiten Lahiri, Sudhendu Majumder, Jnan Majumder, Atul Sen and others met C.R.Das and reached the following agreement :

(a) The revolutionaries would follow the leadership of C.R. Das and work within the Congress.

(b) They would not be allowed to carry on violent activities directly under the garb of Congress and if anybody wished to do so, he must sever his connection with the Congress. As Congress members they must give an undertaking that they did not believe

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64 Home (Pol) File 253/1925, N.A.I.

in violence and that one copy of this agreement should be kept with C.R. Das and another in the Congress office.[65]

Gandhiji too had felt so strongly about the Ordinance that he came down to Calcutta and met C.R. Das at his residence on 3 November 1924. After going through a memorandum, prepared by the revolutionaries and sent to the Secretary of State for India, he issued a statement jointly signed by Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and himself. It ran : "The repression is aimed in reality not at any party of violence, but at the Swarajya Party in Bengal ..."[66]

There was no immediate response from the government. Only after the unity conference in Bombay on 23 November 1924, did Lord Lytton open his mouth. He said : "Our policy is not directed against Mr.Das's party or against any other political party ... but against a terrorist organisation which aims at the overthrow of the present government by force, ... by murder and intimidation."[67] He also warned that the members of that organisation would not be allowed to screen themselves behind any political label or obtain immunity by claiming membership of a party which repudiated violence.[68] The party referred to here was obviously the Swarajya Party.

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65 Ibid.

66 Arun Chandra Guha : Aurobindo and Jugantar, p.67.

67 Lord Lytton : Speeches at the St.Andrew's Day Dinner, 28 November 1924; Speeches delivered by H.E., the Earl of Lytton, P.C., G.I.C.E., Governor of Bengal during 1924-25, Private Secretary's Press, 1926, p. 195.

68 Ibid.

In the British parliament the Communist M. Ps - G. Lansbury and Saklatwala lodged their indignant protest against the arrests of "the nationalist leaders".[69] The Labour M.Ps too criticised the government for these wanton arrests with an intention to cripple the Swarajya Party. Much to the embarrassment of the government, Thurtle, a Labour M.P., compared these arrests under Regulation III to the Bastille imprisonment in France under the system of lettres de cachet.[70]

The Bengal Council met again in January 1925.The government presented the Bengal Ordinance in the form of a Criminal Law Amendment Bill. C.R.Das, in spite of his illness, attended the session. When the votes were taken, the government was defeated; the repressive bill was stalled and the Swarajist tactics once again won the day.[71]

But such victories could no longer conceal the gathering crisis in which the Swarajya Party found itself at that time. Growing internal dissensions, steady erosion of public support and the stiffening attitude of the government compelled C.R.Das to lower his political targets. By then the period of his collaboration with the revolutionaries was practically over. In a press statement, he said that he was prepared to adopt a constructive policy and cooperate with the government on honourable terms.[72]

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69 Home (Pol) File 253/1924, N.A.I.
70 Proceedings, House of Commons, 15 December - 19 December, 1924, Quoted in the Indian Quarterly Register, July - December, Vol.II,Calcutta,1924,p.327.
71 Hemendra Nath Das Gupta : op. cit., p. 116.
72 Report on the Administration of Bengal,1924-25, Calcutta, 1925, p. x..

C.R. Das's biographer Hemendra Nath Das Gupta wrote that by early 1925, C.R. Das was much disturbed because of sporadic outbursts of violence on the one hand and growing repression by the police on the other. He was anxious for an early settlement of the political problems as he wanted to utilise the government machinery in the service of the people. The government too was not unresponsive. C.R. Das, at the request of Lytton, made a public statement on 29 March 1925, condemning violence as an instrument of political action.[73] He alsc made it clear that he wanted Swaraj and political emancipation of India on terms of equality and honourable partnership.[74]

C.R. Das's manifesto was acclaimed by a section of the Anglo-Indian press. Even in course of debate in the House of Commons, Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, responded favourably and declared that he was willing to lay aside all suspicion from his mind. He invited C.R. Das "to take a further step" and "to go forward and co-operate with the Government in repressing violence".[75]

In a leading article "Answering Gesture"/the Forward wrote :

"We appreciate Lord Birkenhead's reference to Das and his invitation to him 'to take a further step'. But if taking of a further step means ... co-operation with the government in repressing violence ... the noble Lord's invitation will not find a

73 Hemendra Nath Das Gupta : op.cit.,p. 119.
74 Ibid.
75 The Indian Quarterly Register,January-June,Vol.I,1925 pp. 88-88 (a)

response .. If he asks for Sj. Das's co-operation ... with a view to eradicate those evils which lie at the root of violence.. he will not find a more hearty co-worker than the leader of the Swarajya Party."[76]

On 3 April, C.R. Das also issued a statement regarding Lord Birkenhead's remarks made in the House of Lords :

"... I venture in return to invite Lord Birkenhead to cause a searching enquiry ... into the causes which have brought about the revolutionary movement in India and then set about applying a proper remedy, so that there may be a radical and permanent cure ... I am unable to co-operate with the Government in its present policy of repression."[77]

The nationalist press seemed to be hostile towards C.R.Das for his political prevarication and compromising attitude. The Ananda Bazar Patrika wrote :"What happened all on a sudden,what sympathetic or magnanimous response has been made by the ruling community that C.R. Das is so eager with a proposal for compromise. ... we believe that there is a deeper mystery underlying all this fuss."[78]

To clear the air of suspicion and enunciate the terms on which the Swarajya Party was willing to abstain from continuous

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76 Forward, 3 April 1925.

77 The Indian Quarterly Register, January-June,Vol.I, 1925, p. 88 (b).

78 AnandaBazar Patrika, 7 April 1925; Quoted in Report on News papers and Periodicals, January-June,1925, p. 344.

opposition and co-operate with the government,keeping in view the declared policy of the party viz., the attainment of self-government, C.R.Das in his presidential speech at the provincial political conference at Faridpur in May 1925,[79] said, "I condemn violence of the Government, just as I condemn violence as a method of winning political liberty".[80] He also pleaded strongly for Dominion Status in that speech.[81]

C.R. Das's speech met with a cold reception.When he tabled a resolution to the effect that his party would consider the terms of co-operation with the government on condition of release of Subhas Chandra Bose, Satyen Mitra and Anil Baran Roy,there arose a cry of protest from the ranks of the revolutionaries. They demanded that condition should be the release of all political prisoners detained without trial. C.R.Das lost his temper, left the hall and threatened his resignation. Ultimately,due to the timely intervention of Gandhiji,the situation was saved and a resolution was adopted demanding the release of all political prisoners,arrested in October 1924, but not those arrested in 1923.[82]

There was also a heated debate on whether the independence envisaged should be "within" or "without" the empire. On this issue C.R.Das carried the day and the word "without" was omitted.

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79 The Indian Quarterly Register, January-June,Vol.I, 1925, p. 88 (c).
80 Ibid., p. 393.
81 Ibid.
82 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, January-June, 1925, B.G.Press,1926, p. 20.
Also interview with Suresh Das, Calcutta,October,1976.

The resolution condemning violence was also passed in the open conference in the face of stiff opposition from the revolutionaries.[83]

C.R.Das's performance at Faridpur was deeply resented by the young militant sections of Bengal. They distributed a printed leaflet, Matter for consideration, which contained denunciation of Gandhiji and C.R.Das for their failure to fulfil the promise of securing independence. They went to the length of accusing C.R.Das of betraying the revolutionaries whom he had used but could not now protect.[84] Reminiscing on the episode some years later, Subhas Chandra Bose also admitted that "Deshbandhu Das made a speech which was regarded as rather tame for a Bengal audience."[85] The revolutionaries by now were totally disillusioned with C.R. Das. They reproached him for throwing them overboard after utilising their services for Council and municipal elections and for satyagraha at Tarakeswar.[86]

C.R. Das was not yet ready to make a final break with revolutionaries as they constituted the principal prop of his organisation and their defection would leave him in the lurch.[87] To pacify them he argued that at Faridpur he had to take that stand as the police were contemplating their arrests. He assured that

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83 Ibid.

84 Ibid. p. 19

85 Subhas Chandra Bose : The Indian Struggle,1920-1942, Calcutta, 1964, p. 109.

86 Fortnightly Reportson the Political situation in Bengal, January - June, 1925, p. 20.

87 Ibid.

within six months the government would come to terms.[88] Nobody actually knew what was happening behind the screen though everybody was awaiting the official gesture for "honourable compromise".

C. R. Das went to Darjeeling for taking rest but fell ill. Gandhiji went there to pay a visit to him. C.R.Das's biographer, Hemendra Nath Das Gupta, wrote that Das had been impressed by Birkenhead's gesture and hoped that the presence of Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India,in London would further help in advancing Indian interest. Gandhiji held an opposite view. He said that Das was expecting too much from the astute British. Because Bengal was then passing through a communal holocaust and was divided into many parties, nothing would come from the unwilling hands of the British. They would never yeild to the weak.[89] Nothing ultimately came. On 16 June 1925, C.R.Das passed away, a tired and frustrated man.

The revolutionaries found it difficult to adjust themselves to the new situation created by the sudden death of C.R.Das.There was no leader in the Swarajya Party to whom they could now turn for support. To add to their problems, the operation of the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act severely restricted their secret

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88 Ibid.

89 Hemendra Nath Das Gupta : op. cit., p. 129.

activities. This Act empowered the government to take recourse to preventive arrests of political suspects and to try cases by special procedure. Moreover, their lack of fund was as considerable as their lack of cohesion among themselves. They felt that the Swarajya Party and the Bengal Congress with its increasing popularity could yet be used as a convenient cover. So in spite of their growing reservations, they were reluctant to break with the Swarajya Party.[90] On 28 June J.M. Sen Gupta, a barrister of Chittagong and a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, assumed the leadership of the party. He pursued the same policy towards the revolutionaries and realised that without their help his party could not succeed in election campaigns. The revolutionaries too depended on financial support from the Swarajya Party.[91] A government report of the time cunningly suggested that Sen Gupta would face the same difficulties as C.R. Das in relying too much on the support of young men of violent temperament.[92] Sen Gupta's predicaments will be discussed in the fourth chapter at some length.

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90 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, January-June, 1925, p. 25.

91 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1932, N.A.I.

92 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, January - June, 1925, p. 25.

Chapter III

THE NEW VIOLENCE PARTY, THE HINDUSTAN REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION AND THE ANUSHILAN, WITH A STUDY IN CONSPIRACY AND DETECTION

1922 - 1928

With the sudden withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement, the hope of winning swaraj within a year came crashing down. The general frustration also affected the revolutionaries but only for a while. They soon overcame that disappointment and tried to take a fresh stock of the situation. Chastened by incarceration, the old guards preferred, by and large, to lead a leisurely life and decried all sorts of revolutionary acts. Some of them took up social work in the Gandhian manner while others began to swim along the placid currents of constitutional politics of the Swarajya Party. A section, however, decided to soldier on, by reorganising their scattered forces, for an uprising at some future date. But the militant younger sections of all the parties (the Anushilan, the Jugantar and the Atmonnati), who accused the dadas of vegetating, wanted an immediate resumption of violent actions to break the general "apathy with shocks".

They were fortunate in having among them Prof.Jyotish Ghosh, a notable revolutionary of Hooghly, who had recently visited Punjab to explore the possibility of building up revolutionary organisation in that province. He advised them not to fritter away their energy by committing isolated actions. He asked Santosh Mitra of the Atmonnati

to arrange a meeting of leaders of the different revolutionary groups and draw up a united programme of action. Santosh was everyone's favourite. He came of an affluent middle-class family of central Calcutta. As advised by Prof.Ghosh,he invited all the party leaders to tea at his residence in Calcutta.Among others present at this get-together were Purna Das, Hem Ghosh,Jadugopal Mukherjee,Manoranjan Gupta, Barin Ghosh,Bhupen Datta,Arun Guha of the Jugantar; Bepin Ganguly, Upen Banerjee,Amrakul Mukherjee of the Atmonnati and Pulin Das, Pratul Ganguly,Trailokya Chakraborty and Harish Sikdar of the Anushilan. They were surprised to find the leaders of rival groups in the same meeting.[1] No word was exchanged amongst them.Being repeatedly pressed by Santosh Mitra to tell something about what they felt should be done,they merely said,"Well you do something,we are with you."[2] Thus Santosh's efforts at uniting the different revolutionary groups on a common platform ended in a fiasco.

This attitude of the top-ranking leaders came as a rude shock to Prof.Ghosh,who had already foreseen the urgent necessity of forming an all-India revolutionary party. He then advised Santosh Mitra to try to persuade the members of different groups to form at least a liaison committee without giving up their separate organisational identities and work in consultation with one another; that itself would serve some limited purpose.[3] From then on the young militants decided to strike out on their own.

There are reasons to believe that the idea of forming an

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1 Biren Banerjee:interview with the author; Salkia,Howrah, February, 1976.
2 Hari Narayan Chandra : Biplabir Sadhana, Vol.I,1st ed., Calcutta, 1973, p. 51.
3 Ibid., pp. 51-52.

amalgamated party was first aired by Jyotish Ghosh,Bepin Ganguly and Santosh Mitra in a secret meeting with the Anushilan headed by Charubikas Datta and Surjya Sen, Nagen (Julu) Sen and Ananta Singh, who were working independently during the B.P.C.C. Conference held in 1922 in Chittagong.According to an intelligence report,being influenced by Santosh Mitra's arguments in favour of fresh activities and deprecating the apparently passive posture of the Anushilan leaders who were termed "old fools", Surjya Sen,Anurup Sen and their followers all combined with Nagen Sen and left the Anushilan and joined the Calcutta group of Santosh Mitra.[4] In no time, the local groups of Baranagore, Howrah, Hooghly, Chandernagore, Krishnanagore and Pabna clustered around them.[5] This was perhaps the beginning of the New Violence Party (N.V.P.) or the All India Revolutionary Party as the police reports of the time chose to call it.

Preparations began for making bombs and high explosives. Nagen Sen and Jasoda Pal, ex-soldiers, collected specimen of hand grenades and bombs of that type were prepared by "Jyotish's personal group". Hari Narayan Chandra started making bomb shells with tin. In this venture he was helped by one Suresh Babu, Lecturer in Chemistry at Presidency College, who supplied him with the formula.[6] To meet the financial needs of the nascant party and to break the tenor of peaceful life preferred by the old revolutionary leaders, Santosh Mitra and others started committing dacoities in and around Calcutta. In May 1923, Santosh's group

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4 D.I.G.,I.B.,Bengal File 1924 on Ananta Singh.
5 Hari Narayan Chandra : op.cit., p. 52.
6 Hari Narayan Chandra : Ibid., Also Home (Pol) File 127/1924, N.A.I.

committed a dacoity at Kona, Howrah resulting in two deaths; in the same month Ultadanga Post Office was looted by his group. In July, the same group committed a robbery at Garpar, Calcutta and in August Sankaritala Post Office in Calcutta was looted and the Post Master was murdered.[7]

Seven members of this group were put on trial in a bomb case. But the government could not defend its action properly. The police was accused by the defence counsel of "deliberately fabricating a false case". "No protest by the Public Prosecutor, no protection from the judges and no remark from the jury" came to save the government. So it was no wonder that Tegart said,"... in this particular case, it was not the accused who were on the trial but the Police".[8] Nitya Gopal Datta turned approver in this case as a result of which his relatives were subjected to social boycott. When Nitya's brother died, none in the neighbourhood could be found for carrying the dead body to the burning ghat; his uncle could not get any tenant for his newly constructed house; to crown all, no bridegroom could be found for Nitya's sister. When "negotiations were practically settled for marriage with one party, the proposal fell through as soon as they came to know that the brother of the bride was an approver."[9] This social ostracism of the approver and his family indicates, even if implicitly, a feeling

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6 Hari Narayan Chandra; Ibid. Also Home (Pol) File 127/1924, N.A.I.
7 D.I.G. I.B., Bengal File 1923 on Alipore Bomb Case.
8 Charles Tegart to Chief Secy., Bengal, 18 April, 1924; Ibid.
9 Ibid.

of general sympathy for the revolutionaries. Because of J.M. Sen Gupta's able advocacy on behalf of the accused,[10] all were acquitted except Baren Ghosh who was sentenced to death. On appeal to the Governor-in-Council his sentence was reduced to transportation for life.[11] But four of the accused viz., Santosh Mitra, Dhiren Bagchi, Subodh Lahiri and Naren Sarkar were again detained under Regulation III.[12]

Another exploit of this group led by Surjya Sen was the robbery in December 1923 of rupees 17,000 which was the property of the Assam Bengal Railway. On search, the police unearthed a store of arms and ammunitions and arrested Surjya Sen and his "gang". But all were released for want of proper evidence. Keeping a small amount with Gopinath Saha in Calcutta, Nagen Sen, Ananta Singh and Deben De went straight to Pondicherry with the money looted to request Aurobindo Ghosh to accept the leadership of the revolutionary organisation. But Barin Ghosh compelled them to leave the place without allowing them to see Aurobindo.[13] There is, however, another version of this episode which perhaps is nearer to the truth : Aurobindo refused to touch the money as it was tainted but

10 Ananta Singh : Agnigarbha Chattogram, Vol.I, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1968, pp. 81 - 82.
11 D.I.G. I.B.Bengal File 1923 on the release of Convict Baren Ghosh of the Sankharitala Post Master murder Case of 1923. Also Judicial File I.C. 10 of 1924, Sl.1-27, Progs.Nos.412-438, W.B.S.A.
12 Home (Pol) File 379/2/1924, N.A.I.
13 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1924 on Ananta Singh.

gave them his blessings. They then spent the entire amount in the preparation of explosives; the brain behind this was Hari Narayan Chandra.[14]

The police had information that the revolutionaries had drawn up a list of police officers for physical extermination. This list included the names of Tegart, Kidd, Deputy Commissioner of Police, S.B., Bhupen Chatterjee, Special Superintendent of Police, I.B.[15] In pursuance of this,Gopinath Saha made an attack on Tegart, but another Englishman was killed due to mistaken identity in January 1924. In April, another attempt was made on Tegart in which Mr.Bruce was shot at. In July, the Red Bengal leaflet made its appearance announcing the decision of assassinating police officers.The government was forewarned of a widespread conspiracy.

All these actions of the new amalgamated party headed by Santosh Mitra disturbed the "peaceful life" of the old dadas who abused him as "spy" or "agent provocateur"[16]. Hatred against Santosh Mitra reached such proportions that all the leaders of the Anushilan and the Jugantar came out of a meeting held at Howrah in 1928 at the sight of Santosh Mitra in the audience.[17] This was not all.This feeling of hatred died hard.Even when the news of Santosh's martyrdom in Hijli Jail in 1931 reached the Jugantar

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14 Hari Narayan Chandra : op.cit., p. 67.

15. D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1923 on Alipore Bomb Case.

16 Hari Narayan Chandra : op.cit., p. 53.

17 Benoy Roy : Jailkhana Anya Prithibi,Calcutta,no. p. 25.

members in the Deoli Detention Camp, they thought of holding a feast.[18] The Swaraj, a daily newspaper run by Nalini Kishore Guha editorially denounced these activities as anarchist and advised the people to extend all sorts of co-operation with the government to put an end to this sort of evils.[19] At last the government clamped down the Ordinance of 1924 which resulted in large-scale arrests of the old dadas including the young Swarajist Subhas Chandra Bose.

The absence of the dadas from active politics made the work of the younger members somewhat easier.[20] Efforts were made to unite the revolutionary groups of the country for joint all-India action. According to a police report, Sachin Sanyal of Banaras who was convicted in Banaras Conspiracy Case of 1915 and his comrades by this time had established an organisation, the Hindustan Republican Association (H.R.A.) at Kanpur, U.P. in 1924. When he came to Bengal to evade arrest, Jogesh Chatterjee, another important Anushilanite, assumed the charge of the party in U.P.[21]

A recent book has hinted at a lively debate over the name of this organisation. Sachin Sanyal suggested that the Anushilan must work under a new name outside Bengal as it was well-known to the police; but Jogesh Chatterjee disagreed. The issue was clinched

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18 Chinmohan Sehanavis : interview with the author, Calcutta, October, 1979.
19 Swaraj, 10th January, 1924.
20 Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.
21 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1925 on Dakshineswar Bomb Case.

by Trailokya Chakraborty and the party assumed a new name - HRA.[22] David M. Laushey has suggested that the HRA was organised to break the impasse and stalemate in the two major political parties.[23] There is a small controversy regarding the date and place of its formation. According to Manmatha Gupta, a member of the HRA, it was formed in 1922[24]; according to all others, it was set up in 1924. If one goes by the evidence of the Anushilan leaders, the HRA was formed in Comilla in east Bengal,[25] but Kiran Das, another member of the HRA and the younger brother of Jatin Das, said that it was formed in the premises of a school in south Calcutta.[26] All accounts, however, agree that both Sanyal and Chatterjee played a prominent role in the formation of this new revolutionary organisation.

In 1924, Sachin Sanyal came to Bengal and contacted Naren Sen of the Anushilan for help in men, money and arms for committing acts of revolutionary violence. Naren Sen declined as his party was then opposed to the immediate resumption of violent activities. Having failed to persuade Sen, Sanyal contacted other militant groups and persuaded them to join the N.V.P.[27] To this newly formed party flocked the militant elements of various parties - the Chittagong groups of Charubikas Datta and Surjya Sen, the

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22 Tarapada Lahiri : 'The Eventful Decade': Freedom Struggle and Anushilan Samiti, p. 210.
23 David M. Laushey: Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left, p. 30.
24 Manmatha Gupta : interview with the author, Kanpur, March, 1971.
25 Tarapada Lahiri : op. cit.
26 Kiran Das : interview with the author, Calcutta, November, 1974.
27 A short note on New Violence Party, prepared by the D.I.G., I.B., Bengal, Typed p. 1.

Bhowanipur group of theHRA, Nalini Datta and his Dacca group which broke away from Naren Sen and Pratul Ganguly of the Anushilan, Prafulla Chaudhuri and Suresh Bose of Faridpur Jugantar, a section of Bepin Ganguly's group of central Calcutta at the initiative of Nagen Sen and finally the militant elements of the Jugantar and the Anushilan "who were in no way daunted by the action taken to put members of the conspiracy under restraint and who seceded from the main parties for their declared non-violent policy"[28]. Thus, from Chittagong to Lahore via Meerat, a united party - the HRA combined with the NVP - sprang up which aimed at collection of arms and ammunition and manufacture of bombs as a prelude to the resumption of the acts of violence.[29] On behalf of this amalgamated party, Sanyal published a series of leaflets like The Revolutionary and Amar Deshbasir Prati Nivedan (An Appeal to My Countrymen). Before his arrest in February 1925, Sanyal had drawn up a list of police officers and police barracks as targets of future attack. He had also intended to blow up the cavalry barrack at Ballygunge.[30]

According to a police report of August 1925 a Central Board was formed with representatives from the following groups and regions :

(a) Hari Narayan Chandra, representing the Uttarpara group;

(b) Ananta Hari Mitra, Nadia;

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28 R.E.A. Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal, 1st April to 31st December,1925,B.G.Press,1926,p.6.

29 Hari Narayan Chandra : op.cit., p.53.

30 A note on New Violence Party, p. 2 (typed).

(c) Charubikas Datta, Chittagong;

(d) Sudhir Bose, Dacca;

(e) Deben De, Calcutta;

(f) Biren Banerjee, Howrah.[31]

In Bengal, the newly amalgamated party worked in the name of N.V.P. and maintained its links with the H.R.A. as its associated unit. Both had cordial relations with the Anushilan in Bengal.[32] The liaison between the two was maintained by Jatin Das alias Gora, Biswanath Mukherjee alias Robin, two trusted lieutenants of Sanyal, and Premranjan Sen, a member of the Calcutta Anushilan.[33] Shortly after Sanyal's arrest in early 1925, Charubikas Datta assumed the leadership of the N.V.P. Soon after Gora and Rabin requested Ramesh Acharya of the Anushilan to send somebody to U.P. to activise the unit there after Sanyal's arrest. They also promised to pay for the travelling expenses of that member .[34] Accordingly, in May 1925 Manmohan Ghosh was sent by Naren Sen to attend the party's conference at Lucknow. Manmohan returned and reported that Ramprasad Bismil, the new leader of the party, had resolved to raise the party's fund by committing dacoities.[35]

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31 Ibid.
Also R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December, 1925, p. 6.
32 Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.
33 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December, 1925, p. 10.
34 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File on Dakshineswar Bomb Case.
35 Ibid.

After his return, Naren Sen sent Gobinda Kar (May 1925) to Lucknow "to keep in touch with the organisation there"[36] and he stayed there under the assumed name of D.N.Chaudhuri. He was in dire need of money and wrote to Bengal for help. But after the Kakori Train Dacoity by the H.R.A. members of U.P. in August 1925, he wrote to Nalini Ghosh of the Anushilan that he no longer needed money. It can be presumed that a portion of the loot of the train dacoity came to his possession.[37] According to the police, the Kakori Train Dacoity was committed to replenish the party fund and it was probable that one of the objects of the raid was to defray the legal expenses of Sanyal's trial in the Bankura Conspiracy Case.[38]

The N.V.P., even after arrests following the Kakori incident, continued to keep alive the revolutionary activities in the Central Provinces, U.P. and Punjab. It was reported that at the request of Jatin Das, Hari Narayan Chandra, an expert manufacturer of bombs, went to U.P. sometime in October, 1925 to train up H.R.A. members in the art of making bombs and he "carried out successful experiments with bombs having cigarette tins"as shells.[39] The N.V.P. had also hired a house at Deoghar where Jatin Das,Hari Narayan Chandra, Biren Banerjee, Indra Narang, a Punjab

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 R.E.A. Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December 1925, p. 9.

revolutionary and Rajen Lahiri (an absconder in the Kakori Case) carried out experiments in making bombs and through Jatin Das and Bhagat Singh the tested formula was sent to the U.P. and Punjab units of the H.R.A.[40]

Meanwhile, the N.V.P. under Charubikas Datta, who stepped into the leadership after Sanyal's arrest in early 1925, adopted a programme of a series of spectacular actions to deal simultaneous blows to the government. Plans were drawn up to commit dacoities in different districts of Bengal. But all these plans fell through due to leakage of information to the police, but more so due to the arrest of Shyamananda Ghosh alias Black jewel, Charu's most trusted lieutenant. Charubikas was arrested in August 1925 in Dacca where he had gone to discuss with Nalini Datta about a proposed dacoity. September saw the arrests of Nalini Datta and Sudhir Bose.[41]

Surjya Sen, the new leader of the party after Charubikas's arrest, agreed to start a campaign of violence. But due to the unusual alertness of the police in Chittagong, he decided to suspend the programme till the organisation stood on firmer footings and more arms were collected. He strove to get arms

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40 Biren Banerjee: interview with the author. Also Hari Narayan Chandra : op.cit., pp. 116 - 117.

41 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December, 1925, p. 6.

through Muslim smugglers of Calcutta but failed as the smugglers were "averse to supplying Hindus with arms owing to the acute ill-feelings ... between the two communities."[42]

On 10 November 1925 the police raided the party's newly established dens at Sovabazar and Dakshineswar and arrested 11 persons including Rajen Lahiri, wanted in the Kakori Case. His shelter at Dakshineswar had been arranged by Jatin Das who kept Rajen's identify a secret even from his comrades. Biren Banerjee later regretted that if only they were informed of the antecedents of Rajen, they could have arranged a better shelter for him. Surjya Sen, who was due to come to Sovabazar, escaped by sheer luck.[43] (For details of the Dakshineswar Bomb Case see pp. 91-102).

Undeterred by these arrests, the N.V.P. continued its link with the HRA. Jiten Sanyal, a Kakori absconder, and a brother of Sachin Sanyal, visited Calcutta in August 1926 to collect money for the legal defence of the Kakori prisoners. He was well received by the NVP leaders. Jiten Sanyal also approached the leaders of the Anushilan with a proposal for the amalgamation of the H.R.A. and the Anushilan.[44] But before the proposal could materialise, Surjya Sen was arrested on 8 October 1926.

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42 R.E.A.Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December 1926, B.G. Press, 1927, p.2
43 Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.
44 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December 1926, p. 4.

Bijan Banerjee, member of the H.R.A., Salkia group,now assumed the leadership of the N.V.P. "He infused fresh life into the party, plotted assassination, spoke of arranging series of outrages, for which he had ... deputed members to learn preparation of explosives" from Nalini Gupta, M.N. Ray's emissary to India. But no attempts could be made as bombs were not ready and eight members of the party were arrested.[45] However, the party continued to function, sent emissaries to U.P. and arms were exchanged regularly. Bijan resolved to kill police officers and planned an outrage of a spectacular kind - throwing of bombs in the Bengal Legislative Council. But due to his arrest on 17 January 1927, the plan fell through.[46]

After Bijan's, arrest, Keshab Chakraborty, a "fanatical" member of the Banaras group of the H.R.A. became the leader of the party. He plotted the murder of suspected spies and police officers. The job was assigned to Kiron Das. He even thought of blowing up Lord Lytton's train. After his arrest in early 1927, the leadership passed on to the Chittagong group. Sukhendubikas Datta now became the leader. He called for the murder of police officers to retaliate Surjya Sen's arrest.[47]

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45 R.E.A.,Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st January to 30th June, 1927, B.G.Press,1927,p.2.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid. pp. 2 - 3.

Due to the series of arrests, the organisation was steadily disintegrating. The arrest of Sukhendubikas in 1927 left it without any prominent leader[48] and it broke into scattered groups viz., Salkia group, Domjur group, Bhawanipur group, central Calcutta group,Nadia group, Chittagong group, etc.[49] Birendra Bhattacharyya of Banaras group came down to Calcutta (1927) to combine the scattered groups into one organisation[50] under a central board consisting of one member from each group. But the new board lacked the authority and striking power of the original board because its members were "inferior in capacity and experience" to the earlier leaders of the N.V.P.[51] On his way back to Banaras, Birendra Bhattacharyya was arrested at Deoghar on October 1927 with arms and valuable documents including a cipher. On decoding the cipher, the police unearthed a conspiracy extending from Bengal to parts of north India. Simultaneous raids were made in different haunts of the party in Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, U.P. and Punjab. A conspiracy case - Deoghar Conspiracy Case - was instituted against 20 persons of whom 13 were sentenced to different terms of inprisonment.[52]

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48 F.P.Mackinty: Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December 1927, B.G.Press, 1928, p.1.
49 R.E.A.,Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st January to 30th June 1927, p. 3.
50 A short note on the New Violence Party, p. 5(typed).
51 R.E.A.,Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st January to 30th June 1927, p. 4.
52 A short note on the New Violence Party, pp. 5 - 6.

During the trial, Manindra Sil of Banaras took up leadership in Calcutta. The remarkable feature of this time was the willingness of young militants of different groups to work together under the leadership of any one who could hold out a promise of determined action.[53] As there was no such leader in the field there were no coordinated efforts and the different groups acted independently of one another.The Bhowanipur group became restive and opted for sporadic actions including an attempt on the life of Rai Bahadur J.N.Mukherjee, a police officer at Banaras.The Chittagong group was engaged in reorganising itself; the other groups not being able to decide as to what to do, awaited the return of their leaders from prison. Members of Dacca, Bhowanipur, Chittagong and U.P. groups were in favour of militant actions but were restrained by the leaders who were just released (1928); they agreed to suspend violent activities for the time being as the proposal for merger of the Anushilan and Jugantar was already mooted.[54] This will be taken up in the next chapter.

Thus to sum up, the relation between the N.V.P., the H.R.A. and the Anushilan during this time was cordial and they leaned on one another for support. The arrest of Rajen Lahiri from a shelter provided by the "Dakhineswar gang" in 1925 and their

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53 R.E.A.,Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st January to 30th June 1927, p. 4.

54 A short note on the New Violence Party, pp. 6 - 7.

association with Jatin Das and Biswanath Mukherjee were examples of this liaison.[55] It is thus evident that the N.V.P. and the H.R.A. were "really one and the same" and the Deoghar raid conclusively proved the "combination of various groups in Bengal"[56]. The relation of these parties (NVP and HRA) with the Anushilan cannot be explained easily. The Anushilan during this period suspended violence, eschewed the policy of forging currency notes and was contemplating a future uprising on ~~the~~ an all-India scale. A section, however, was being drawn towards the ideas of Bolshevism. Notwithstanding all these current and cross-currents that swayed the Anushilan during all these lean years, it had a soft corner for the above-mentioned parties; Naren Sen forgave Jatin Das for his dacoity at Hazra Road (September 1925) and sent regular help to the U.P. unit of H.R.A. This was perhaps due to Naren's urge to keep under control the cadres who had high regard for Sachin Sanyal and perhaps also due to his own spontaneous sympathy for any programme of active violence.[57]

The Kakori dacoity had revealed to the police that the whole inspiration came from Bengal : "the directing minds were the

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55 F.P.Mackinty : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December 1927, p. 6.

56 Ibid.

57 R.E.A.,Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December, 1925, p. 11.

Bengalees", the arms used in actions were from Bengal and "the methods adopted were similar to those that had been tried in Bengal"[58]. The other provinces which had hitherto been immune to the "terrorist contagion" were "impregnated with terrorist virus from Bengal."[59]

It is not easy to specify the exact role played by the N.V.P. in the unfolding chronicle.What was undoubtedly new in the N.V.P. was its sincere desire to bring together the different, even rival groups on a common platform for united revolutionary action against the government.The desire, however, never came to fruition. The gulf between aspiration and achievement remained as wide at the beginning as at the end. In this respect, the new organisation represented no more than a trend; it failed to grow into a movement.The original programme of marching together and striking together soon appeared as too ambitious. Even the reduced programme of marching separately but striking together proved to be equally abortive. The result was poor performance, evoking even poorer response from the militant youth.

Why was it that the N.V.P. could not achieve even a limited measure of success? Some of the causes may be identified as follows. The old dadas of almost all the groups were, by then,

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58 Ibid., p. 10.

59 Ibid.

warweary and homesick. They were deeply reluctant either to initiate or to participate in new acts of violence which would inevitably cause fresh sufferings. Their determination to go slow together with their tenacious hold on their respective organisations (partly retained by fanning the dying embers of group rivalaries) proved insuperable obstacles to the N.V.P. The poor rate of recruitment of new activists failed to keep pace with the soaring ambitions of the party, led largely by untried leaders. The low rate of recruitment can be partly explained by the stalemate in the national movement between Chauri-Chaura and Simon Commission. The problem created by the non-cooperation of parent-organisations was compounded by the absence of fresh recruits and effective leadership. The plan of securing arms from abroad, even if seriously pursued, was foredoomed to failure. For one thing, any hope of receiving adequate amount of arms from overseas in mid 20s was, in view of changed international situation, merely a pipe-dream, for another, the small and scattered groups of revolutionaries lacked the national resources to realise so grandiose a plan.The episode merely exposed the dilemma these revolutionaries found themselves in. Burning with a desire to do something really heroic, they did not know what to do and how to do it.

Finally, the activities of the N.V.P. were largely confined within the greater Calcutta area where it was relatively easier for the secret police to forestall its moves.

The Dakshineswar Bomb Case 1925 - 26

A study in conspiracy and detection

On 10 November 1925, the police, on receiving definite information raided two houses, one at 4 Sovabazar Street in Calcutta and the other at Bachaspatipara, Dakshineswar, 24 Parganas, and arrested eleven persons. The police filed a case, known as the Dakshineswar Bomb Case.

It has already been mentioned how the militant elements of different revolutionary groups in Bengal amalgamated and formed a party - the New Violence Party with links with the Hindusthan Republican Association and the Anushilan and a centfal board consisting of representatives from different groups and districts. According to a police agent called J.P.7 (who presumably was connected with one of these groups) a secret conference was held in February or March 1925 at the Sibpur Botanical Gardens which was attended by Biren Banerjee, Chaitanya Deb Chatterjee and seven or eight members of the N.V.P. There it was decided that Biren would be the chief district organiser of Howrah and Chaitanya of Hooghly. Biren would represent Howrah on the central board and would be in charge of intelligence, finance and contacts with other districts and provinces.He was given the code name Asoke.Hari Narayan Chandra, who would bear the code name Dada, would be in sole charge of

making bombs.[60] That meeting also worked out a plan for spreading the organisational network throughout Bengal and collecting subscriptions from affiliated groups. A part of the collected money would be handed over to the central organisation which, in return, would provide them with arms, amunitions and bombs.[61]

Earlier in 1924, the Salkia group came in close contact with the Domejur group of Ashu Bhattacharya and Gosto Mukherjee. Bepin Ganguly and Nagen Sen who were evading arrest were sheltered by Bijan Banerjee at Domejur. As the police became suspicious of the activities of the Salkia group its members left home and went underground. Bijan Banerjee, Biren Banerjee and Sudhangshu Chaudhuri took shelter in a den at 4 Sovabazar Street. They were soon joined by Hari Narayan Chandra, Ananta Hari Mitra and Promode Chaudhuri.[62] Around August 1925 Biren Banerjee hired a house at Baranagore and lived there with some other absconders. But as they attracted the notice of Khagen Chatterjee's group, which worked independently of the N.V.P., they soon shifted to Dakshineswar, which now became an important centre; the headquarters, however, remained at Sovabazar.[63] According to an agent (J.P.7), it was at Sovabazar and Dakshineswar haunts that the party decided to send members abroad for establishing contacts with foreign

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60 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1925 on Biren Banerjee.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.

revolutionaries. It was also reported that the party thought of sending emissaries to Japan, China, Russia and England for importing arms.[64] According to the same source, the Central Committee in Calcutta was composed of Panchu Daw, Biren Banerjee, Chaitanya Deb Chatterjee, Ananta Hari Mitra, and Nikhil Banerjee. Biren used Santosh Ganguly of Domepara Lane, Salkia, as the party's post box and the party used to keep money with Bankim Mukherjee and Chaitanya Deb Chatterjee since they were relatively less known to the police.[65]

There are different versions as to how the party's den at Dakshineswar was unearthed by the police. According to the police, on 7 November, a political suspect and some young strangers were proceeding to Cossipore. A watcher followed them but lost track of them; he, however, was able to trace a taxi, the driver of which stated that the young men had dismissed him at Baranagore and had continued their journey in a hackney carriage. The coachman was then traced who stated that the young men stopped him at some distance from their actual place of destination and asked him to wait until they fetched the fare, but he failed to identify the house. This excessive secretiveness about their destination put the police on the alert; they became certain that the house was a shelter for absconders[66] and soon succeeded in tracking it down.

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1925 on Dakshineswar Bomb Case, Part I.

Ananta Singh gave a different account. He held that but for betrayal, the police could not have found out the haunt[67]. Perhaps a more authoritative view was expressed by Hari Narayan Chandra and it was corroborated by Biren Banerjee. The view is akin to the police version. According to Chandra, some friends at Dakshineswar were in bed with fever. At Sovabazar, Dhrubesh also was suffering from fever.Thinking that medical treatment would be easier if all the patients were kept in a single house, Biren Banerjee and Ananta Hari Mitra were sent to escort Dhrubesh to Dakshineswar by a taxi. At Cossipore they left the taxi and hired a hackney carriage. They left the carriage at Dakshineswar and proceeded on foot. The police noted the taxi number and on the basis of enquiry from the coachman approached their destination. But the police could not spot out the haunt and on 10 November surrounded a house adjacent to their haunt. Women of that house came out panic-stricken and pointed out to the police the house they were looking for. Both Biren and Hari Narayan were sure that there was no betrayal from within.[68]

Anyway, on receipt of information about some absconders of the Kakori Case, the police, led by Armstrong,the Deputy I.G., surrounded the house at Dakshineswar in early morning at about 6-30 a.m.on 10 November,1925. The door of the main-building was

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67 Ananta Singh : Agnigarbha Chattogram, p. 221.

68 Hari Narayan Chandra : op.cit. Vol.I.,pp.122-23. Also interview with Biren Banerjee.

opened by one of the inmates who was at once put under arrest. He gave his name as Nemai De. He was really Rakhal De. Soon other inmates were noticed as hurriedly closing the doors and the windows of the upper floor including the door of the staircase on the first floor. Smoke was found coming out; torn pieces of papers were seen flying about the windows upstairs. Eventually the door on the staircase was forced open; one inmate who tried to escape was arrested; in another room four persons were found lying ill.[69]

An almirah containing a bomb was forced open. Robson, Chief Inspector of Explosives, removed the bomb and put it into water. While he was examining it, Rajen Lahiri sought permission to remove the fuse of the bomb in order to make it harmless. Rajen's request was turned down. In a statement to the C.I.D. Rajen divulged his intention of blowing up the C.I.D. barrack at Bhowanipur.A C.I.D.Officer admitted that the bomb seized was "powerful enough to blow the whole police party to atoms"[70].

The Sovabazar haunt was also raided on the same day at about 2 p.m. The police forced open the door and after a scuffle arrested Promode Chaudhuri and Ananta Chakraborty. In a state of excitement the police enquired "Where is Surjya Sen?" He had by then escaped from the Sovabazar den.[71]

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69 D.I.G.,I.B. Bengal File 1925 on Dakshineswar Bomb Case, Part I.

70 Ibid.

71 Ananta Singh : op.cit., p\ 222.

From the Dakshineswar den, the police seized several bottles of sulphuric acid and nitric acid; a bottle of glycerine and a live bomb. According to the police, this bomb was of a more dangerous type than those found previously in or around Calcutta. Other articles included test tubes, glass funnels, a Webley patent six-chambered revolver fully loaded, a pistol, seven cartidges and instructions for the preparation of 72 items of explosives.[72] The police claimed that a "bomb factory" was unearthed.

Among the documents seized at Sovabazar was a copy of the official programme of the party which described its aim as the achievement of "independence of the country by all possible means including armed revolution"[73]. The programme went on to say that the desired goal could be achieved through the following stages :

"(a) Individual demonstration such as murder of high officials, the capture of government arms and ammunition, the destruction of government institutions, jail outbreaks etc.;

(b) Simultaneous demonstration;

(c) Insurrection including guerilla warfare;

(d) Revolution".[74]

According to the intelligence report, this programme shows that "the terrorists profiting by their past experience had come

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72 Forward, 3 December 1925.
73 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December 1925, p.8.
74 Terrorism in India 1917-1936, p. 22.

to the conclusion that it was necessary to have a plan of campaign on a much wider plane than isolated acts of violence and murders.[75]

It also transpired from an enquiry into the Dakshineswar Case that the party arranged for smuggling of arms from abroad. Hari Narayan deputed Sudhangshu Chaudhuri to get in touch with the Indians employed in ships of the British India Navigation Company (operating in the Far East) as wireless watchers,clerks, gunners and electricians. Nirmal Sen alias Barrister was sent to Rangoon to contact arms smugglers there. Deben De (alias Khoka) went to Singapore disguised as a lascar. Sudhangshu acted as a link between Biren Banerjee in Calcutta and the members posted in Rangoon and Singapore.The party succeeded in enlisting the support of one Phanindra Bose, a clerk of S.S. Arankala and one Ajmat Ali, a wireless watcher on a ship named S.S.Edvana for securing automatic pistols and arms. Nirmal succeeded in stealing a revolver from the office of the Commissioner of Police,Rangoon which he gave to Sudhangshu for transmission to Biren in Calcutta.[76]

According to a police report, Sudhangshu contacted Rash Behari Bose in Japan for arms and requested him to undertake the forgery of Indian currency notes there. Arrangements were made

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75 Ibid.

76 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31st December,1925; p. 9.

to contact M.N.Roy, Abani Mukherjee and Raja Mahendra Pratap who were in exile to arrange shelters for absconders in Japan and San Fransisco. Rash Behari was requested to arrange for the military training of the cadres. Sudhangshu was given two addresses of two members of the Communist International and was asked to contact them.[77] The party also contacted Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay or Chatto. It was reported by the police that Chatto received a letter from Mrs. Naidu (younger sister of Chatto) asking him if he could arrange for regular smuggling of arms to India. She made this enquiry "at the special request of some important revolutionary leaders who believed that the time has come to start Irish tactics in India."[78] Chatto, after consulting his friends, informed his sister that Rs.15 lakhs would be required for that purpose.[79] The party also planned for spectacular bomb outrages. But the sudden arrest of 11 members at Sovabazar and Dakshineswar nipped the plan in the bud and disorganised the party for the time being.

The government constituted a Special Tribunal under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1925 consisting of Mr.J.W. Nelson, Mr. Mussafar Ahmed and Rai Bahadur Suresh Chandra Sinha to try the nine persons connected with the Dakshineswar incident.

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77 Ibid.

78 Home (Pol) File 65/1924 N.A.I. The Bengal revolutionaries had connection with the family of Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay. But it is not clear to the author as to the identity of 'Mrs Naidu' whether she is Sarojini or her sister Mrinalini.

79 Ibid.

These nine persons were : Hari Narayan Chandra, Biren Banerjee, Nikhil Bandhu Banerjee, Dhrubesh Chatterjee, Rajen Lahiri, Ananta Hari Mitra, Rakhal Chandra De, Debi Prasad Chatterjee and Sibram Chatterjee. B.L. Mitra, Advocate General, N.N. Banerjee, Public Prosecutor and Gunen Sen appeared for the Crown. All the accused except Rajen Lahiri were defended by A.C. Mukherjee, Harsha Nath Banerjee, C.C.Biswas, A.K. Mukherjee and Hemanta Kumar Roy Chaudhuri. Rajen was defended by N.R.Das Gupta, Girija Mohan Sanyal, Sachin Banerjee, Nalini Mukherjee and Sailesh Nath Bishi[80]. Promode Chaudhuri and Ananta Chakraborty, the accused in the Sovabazar Street Case were tried by another Special Tribunal formed on 2 January, 1926.

The press in Bengal expressed its misgivings about the hush-hush manner in which the trial was being conducted and demanded that the prisoners "should be tried in open court and punished, if found guilty".[81] The Ananda Bazar Patrika of 13 November wrote that these searches and arrests were nothing but an attempt to counter the country's demand for the release of political prisoners. It expressed its suspicion that such a "sensational discovery" was a "pre-arranged" thing and it did not in any way prove the existence of widespread revolutionary gang in Bengal.[82]

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80 Forward, 3 December, 1925.

81 Report on News papers and Periodicals in Bengal July - December, 1925; p. 843.

82 Ibid., p. 845.

The Dainik Basumati of 12 November wrote that the discovery of a "single bomb" did not amount to the discovery of a "bomb factory" at Dakshineswar[83].

The authorities, however, considered the prisoners to be a "desperate gang" and apprehended the possibility of attempts to rescue the prisoners while "in transit" and of attacks on the prosecuting counsel and the police officers engaged in the case. Precautions were therefore taken against such eventualities[84] :

(a) one sergent would be deputed outside the prisoners' cage; one sergeant would be posted to regulate admission into the room;

(b) only on permission of the Public Prosecutor would any outsider be allowed admittance into the court room;

(c) with the exception of the press, only persons actually related to the accused would be allowed as visitors; outsiders would be denied entry "tactfully" on the alleged ground that accommodation inside was limited;

(d) all prisoners were to be searched thoroughly before leaving for the court and while returning to jail; and prisoners wishing to answer nature's call were to be escorted by a sergeant and would be subjected to careful searches before re-entering the court;

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83 Ibid., p. 843.

84 D.I.G., I.B.Bengal File 1925 on Dakshineswar Bomb Case: special arrangements for the safe custody of the Exhibits, security of the prisoners and protection of the Court etc.

(e) prisoners would not be allowed to communicate with any outsider between leaving and entering the jail; and any supply of food to them from outside was strictly forbidden; etc.[85]

The judgement in the Dakshineswar bomb case was delivered on 9 January, 1926. Hari Narayan Chandra, Ananta Hari Mitra and Rajen Lahiri were sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment; Biren Banerjee, Nikhil Bandhu Banerjee, Dhrubesh Chatterjee and Rakhal De to five years' r.i.; Debi Prasad Chatterjee and Shibram Chatterjee to three years' r.i. In the Sovabazar case, the judgement was delivered on 15 January 1926 which sentenced Promode Chaudhuri and Ananta Chakraborty to five years' r.i.[86]

The nationalist press, especially the Amrita Bazar Patrika,[87] the Viswamitra[88] and the Nayak[89] condemned the ferocity of the judgement in unequivocal terms.

The prisoners appealed to the High Court for reconsideration of their sentences. This made the authority somewhat nervous since if released, they would constitute a serious threat to the state. In a note dated 28 December 1926 the Additional Deputy Secretary wrote that "if acquitted, it will be necessary

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85 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal, to B.L.Mitra, Advocate General, dated 1st December, 1925; Ibid.
86 Kali Charan Ghose: Jagaran-Bisphron, 2nd Vol.II, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1973, p.495.
87 Reports of Newspapers and Periodicals in Bengal January - December, 1926, p. 36.
88 Ibid., p. 46
89 Ibid., p. 36.

to arrest them under B.C.L.A. Act, as they are very dangerous revolutionaries."[90] The High Court confirmed the sentences;only the sentence passed on Rajen Lahiri was reduced to five years r.i. The appeals of prisoners involved in the Sovabazar case were turned down.[91]

While the prisoners of the Dakshineswar and Sovabazar cases.were undergoing trial (before the appeal to the High Court) Bhupen Chatterjee, an I.B. Officer was murdered on 28 May 1926 by Promode Chaudhuri and Nikhil Banerjee with an iron shovel within the jail premises.The prisoners were tried by a Special Tribunal in the jail murder case.The judges found all of them guilty of pre-meditated murder and sentenced Ananta Hari Mitra, Promode Chaudhuri and Biren Banerjee to death; Hari Narayan Chandra, Nikhil Banerjee, Sudhangshu Chaudhuri,Dhrubesh Chatterjee, Ananta Chakraborty,Rakhal De and Debi Prosad Chatterjee to transportation for life.[92] On appeal to the High Court, the death sentences on Ananta Hari and Promode were confirmed (9 August 1926); sentences on Dhrubesh,Ananta and Rakhal were also confirmed; others were acquitted.[93]

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90 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1925 on Dakshineswar Bomb Case, Part II.

91 Kalicharan Ghosh : op.cit., p. 495.

92 Ibid., p. 497.

93 Ibid. Also D.I.G., I.B.Bengal File 1925 on Biren Banerjee.The judges differed on sentence on Promode.Justice Mukherjee directed transportation for life and Justice Rankin for capital punishment.The case was then referred to the third judge, who gave the verdict for capital punishment.Biren Banerjee told the author that Ananta Hari was not at all involved in the jail murder.At the time of occurrence,Ananta Hari was in meditation.Except Nikhil and Promode,nobody was involved in the jail murder.

Chapter IV

THE KARMI SANGHA, SOCIALIST TRENDS, THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS, THE REVOLT GROUP, CALCUTTA CORPORATION AND BENGAL REVOLUTIONARIES 1925 - 1932

I

The Karmi Sangha and Bengal Politics

In this section, an attempt has been made to specify the problems J.M.Sengupta, C.R.Das's successor, had to face in regard to the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries after the death of C. R. Das succeeded in extending their influence inside the Swarajya Party. In the B.P.C.C. election of 1925, they won a majority of 26 in a total of 262 members; the east Bengal districts were solely represented by them or their sympathisers. In the executive council of 92, they had a majority of 48.[1] Having thus consolidated their position, they were now determined not to allow the Congress to exploit them as they had been exploited in the past.[2] They soon organised their own platform, called the Karmi Sangha (Workers' League)[3].

Suresh Chandra Das was its secretary and Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay its president. According to Suresh Das, "We were workers at the grass-root level but the dadas used us as their political tools, usurped all the credit of our successful actions.

1 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st April to 31 December 1925, p. 3.
2 Ibid.
3 Suresh Chandra Das : interview with the author.

We had no status. So we formed the Sangha to prevent the dadas from using us as their tools and to strengthen our bargaining power inside the Congress-Swarajya Party"[4].

The Karmi Sangha was mainly composed of the Jugantar revolutionaries but a considerable number of workers of the Anushilan, of Bepin Ganguli's group and also of the group owing allegiance to Hem Ghosh of Dacca (later on the founder of the B.V.) were its members. The executive committee of the Sangha was formed with those who were members of the B.P.C.C.[5]

The Karmi Sangha was against the Big Five (Dr.B.C.Roy, a Swarajist and a well-known physician of Calcutta, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, a businessman and an M.L.C., Sarat Bose, elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose and an M.L.C., T.C. Goswami, a zamindar of Serampore and an M.L.C. and N.C. Chandra, a leading lawyer and an M.L.C.) who represented the upper-class coterie in the Congress. So they looked for alternative leadership and at first opted for Subhas Chandra Bose because of his record of suffering for the national cause and his personal links with the revolutionaries. But as he was then languishing in Mandalay Jail, they supported J.M.Sen Gupta instead. It was indeed the support of the Sangha that enabled Sen Gupta to defeat a move to oust him from the presidentship of the Swarajya Party. In fact the Sangha helped him to win the triple

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

crown i.e., the Presidentship of the B.P.C.C., the leadership of the Swarajya Party and the Mayorship of the Calcutta Corporation.[6]

The Karmi Sangha, however, suffered from serious weaknesses. Most of its members cherished deep-seated anti-Muslim prejudices, scoffed at all talks of Hindu-Muslim unity and some of its members even actively participated in the Calcutta riots of 1926[7]. On 22 May 1926 at the B.P.C.C. Conference at Krishnanagore, Karmi Sangha vehemently opposed the Bengal Pact. B. N. Sasmal, the president of the Conference, defended the Pact and uttered a few words deploring the "terrorist activities".But the Sangha "by organised rowdyism swamped the meeting" and forced Sasmal to leave it.[8] On the next day,the annulment of the Pact was discussed in spite of opposition from Sen Gupta who,disgusted with the revolutionaries,withdrew from the conference along with his followers. The majority of the delegates including the members of the Karmi Sangha under the presidentship of J.Chaudhuri met next day and rejected the Pact on the ground that "it had proved a fruitful source of communal discord and had unduly encroached upon the rights of the Hindus".[9]

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6 Ibid.

7 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December, 1926, p.9.

8 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1932, N.A.I.

9 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1925-26, Calcutta, 1927, p. XV.

Most of the nationalist newspapers supported this annulment of the pact. The Ananda Bazar Patrika expressed its satisfaction by saying that the Pact had been intended to bribe the Muslims and to keep them in the Swarajya Party.[10] The Amrita Bazar Patrika expressed similar sentiments.[11] But the Forward made a blistering attack on the opponents of the Bengal Pact and held that "a foolish phantasma had obscured their vision."[12]

Loyal to his departed leader, J.M. Sen Gupta convened a meeting of the B.P.C.C.on 13 June 1926 at the Indian Association Hall in Calcutta and stated that as some members of the executive committee were working against the Bengal Pact, a new executive committee be formed forthwith which would enjoy the confidence of the B.P.C.C. But his stand was opposed by the critics who interpreted that Sen Gupta was anxious to retain the Pact "as merely a device to snatch a few Muslim votes for the Swarajya Party at the coming elections which would not be available if the Pact was rescinded."[13]

The meeting of 13 June was largely attended; out of 319 members, 250 including 30 Muslims were present. In this meeting Dr. Mohini Mohan Das, a veteran Swarajist, moved a resolution to the effect that the B.P.C.C. endorsed the Bengal Pact and

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10 Ananda Bazar Patrika, 25 May 1926.
11 Report on the News papers and Periodicals in Bengal, January-December, 1926, p. 356.
12 Forward, 25 May 1926; Ibid, p. 348.
13 The Indian Quarterly Register, January-June, Vol.1 1926, Calcutta, p. 85.

disowned the validity of the session held on 23 May 1926 with J. Chaudhuri in the chair. A commotion ensued. The Karmi Sangha firmly opposed this resolution. Their spokesman Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay said that if Swaraj was to depend on pacts and compromises, they must wash their hands clean of it. He asked the members not to practise self-deception.[14] On the question of dissolution of the present executive, Suresh Das sharply observed that it was a Zulum against them as they were opposed to the Pact.[15] In spite of strong opposition from the members of the Karmi Sangha, the resolution was passed by a majority.[16]

A new executive was formed by Sen Gupta excluding the members of the Karmi Sangha. The Sangha, in a state of anger, issued a manifesto in June over the signatures of Amarendranath Chattopadhyay, Upen Banerjee, Suresh Majumder and Suresh Das. The manifesto criticised the Congress as merely an electioneering machine, accused it of neglecting village reconstruction work and reiterated the civic rights of the Hindus to conduct procession with music along public roads.[17] Satish Chandra Sarkar, officiating Secretary of the Sangha, issued a statement on 7 August 1926 in which he charged the Congress leadership as "unconstitutional, undemocratic and autocratic" and wanted to see the B.P.C.C. "purged of autocracy and unconstitutionalism".[18] It seemed that the

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14 Ibid.
15. Ibid.,p. 90
16 Ibid.,p. 91
17 Ibid., pp. 93-94
18 Ibid., July-December,Vol.II, pp. 42,44.

Sangha was determined to have a showdown with the re-formed executive of the B.P.C.C.

But exigencies of the situation somewhat delayed the showdown. As the election to Bengal Legislative Council was fast approaching, Sengupta needed very badly the services of the Karmi Sangha. Considering their services to be more valuable than those of the Muslims, he came to an understanding with the Sangha in August 1926 and agreed to appoint 12 of its members to the executive. As a protest, B.N. Sasmal resigned from the executive.[19] Sen Gupta's alliance with the Sangha paid him good dividends; the Congress won 75% seats in the election.[20] The Karmi Sangha defeated Sasmal in his home constituency at Midnapore. It was alleged that its members who became the chief election agents took money from the candidates but spent a large portion of it for their own secret propaganda and activities.[21]

In December 1926, J.M.Sengupta resigned the Presidentship of the B.P.C.C. because of factionalism in his party and a new executive committee was formed with Sasmal as its head, who nominated only four Karmis to that body.[22] The Karmi Sangha obviously felt humiliated. By February 1927, it took revenge on Sasmal by combining with the Big Five and succeeded in

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19 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1932, N.A.I.
20 Suresh Chandra Das : interview with the author.
21 R.E.A.,Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December 1926, p.9.
22 Ibid.

passing a vote of no-confidence against him, "in spite of the latter's abject apology for his public condemnation of the revolutionaries at Krishnanagore Conference, 1926"[23] and formed a new executive. Sasmal refused to yield and declined to resign, with the result that two parallel executive committees functioned in Bengal.[24] The A.I.C.C.tried to bring about a reconciliation between the two but failed due to the obstinate attitude of the Sangha.[25] In June 1927, Sasmal in disgust resigned from the Congress. A new executive was then formed including the Big Five; it consisted of 20 revolutionaries out of a total of 60 members. Of these 20 revolutionaries, 16 belonged to the Karmi Sangha.[26] Subhas Chandra Bose became the President of this new executive, but the Karmi Sangha wielded so much influence that a leader like Subhas Chandra Bose had to come to terms with it in running the B.P.C.C.[27] The last successful exploits of the Sangha were that it was instrumental in defeating Sasmal in the Calcutta Corporation election of 1927 and in securing the election of J. M. Sen Gupta as Mayor. By 1928 when all the leaders had come out of jails, the Sangha disbanded itself.[28]

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23 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st January to 30th June, 1927, p. 12.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1932, N.A.I.
28 Suresh Chandra Das : interview with the author.

Here some observations on the role of the Karmi Sangha may conveniently be made. First of all, the Karmi Sangha lacked any socio-economic programme for the upliftment of the vast majority of the downtrodden people. Secondly, the outlook of most of its members was vitiated by communalism. This is evident from its stand on Hindu-Muslim problems and more specifically on the Bengal Pact. Its success in subverting the Bengal Pact and its growing influences inside the B.P.C.C. alienated the Muslims who considered it essentially a Hindu organisation. This communal attitude of the Sangha only brought grist to the mill of hardened Muslim communalists and set the stage for the further rise of Muslim communal elements.[29] Thirdly, the Karmi Sangha throughout the period (1925-28) acted as an unprincipled body in the Congress factional fight - first between Sen Gupta and Sasmal and then between Sen Gupta and Subhas Chandra Bose. By exercising their power as a sordid pressure group inside the Congress and by exacting good dividends from those they supported, they made it clear that no leader however big could hope to remain in office without their consent. For persons who once dreamt heroic dreams of freeing the motherland from the foreign yoke and suffered immensely for their convictions, such degeneration was indeed pathetic. The Karmi Sangha, in short, represented all that was shallow, shoddy and backward in the revolutionary movement and

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29 Krishna Pada Chakraborty : interview with the author, Calcutta, May 1978.

played a highly disruptive role in national politics, even if for a very brief period. The revolutionary movement, however, was viable enough to live down this dismal episode even before the end of the decade. The march, temporarily suspended, was resumed.

II

Socialist trends[30]

Meanwhile, during 1926-1930, new ideas and trends were abroad inside the national movement. During this period, communist influence was steadily gaining ground. Gopen Chakraborty, who had been sent to Moscow by the Anushilan, returned in June 1925.[31] He put forward a new scheme for organising the party, which was gradually accepted by some members of the Anushilan except Malini Ghosh[32]. By 1925 these elements representing the new ideology broke with the Anushilan and formed the Labour Swaraj Party, which was soon joined by communists like Kutubuddin Ahmed, Abdul Halim, Muzaffar Ahmed and a Swarajist like Hemanta Sarkar. By 1926, the name of the party was changed to the Workers' and Peasants' Party of

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30 For a fuller discussion and for later developments see Chapter VIII.

31 H. Williamson : India and Communism, compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept., Simla, Reprinted, 1935, p. 235.

32 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December, 1926, p. 6.

which the inner core was formed by revolutionaries like Nalini Gupta, Dharani Goswami, Gopen Chakraborty, who had already broken with the Anushilan.[33] A government report however recorded that a secret branch of this party had always maintained its links with the Anushilan.[34] This was corroborated by Soumyendra Nath Tagore, himself a member of the party. He was deputed by the party to maintain contacts with the revolutionaries in order to win them over to the party and he claimed that he was to some extent successful in his attempt.[35] There were similar attempts which did not go unnoticed by the Intelligence Branch. To quote a report : "Muzaffar Ahmed is evidently leading the organisation or at least is in touch with it which is connected with so many revolutionaries."[36]

There are several examples to show that the Workers' and Peasants' Party had close links with the U.P. revolutionaries and even with the Congress activists. It was reported by the I.B. that Abdul Halim, a Meerat prisoner, while coming back to Bengal, brought with him some copies of English leaflets published over the signature of Kartar Singh of the Hindusthan Republican Association, now renamed Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association (H.S.R.A.), and distributed them in Bengal. Batukeswar Datta of the

33 F.P.Mackinty : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December, 1927, p. 10. Also author's interview with Gopen Chakraborty, Calcutta, Sept.1969.
34 Memorandum on the history of terrorism in Bengal 1905-1933, B.G. Press, 1933, p. 12.
35 Soumyendra Nath Tagore : Yatri, Calcutta,1975, p. 92.
36 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1922 on Muzaffar Ahmed, Part III.

HSRA, an accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, was a member of the Workers' and Peasants' Party; he often stayed in its Calcutta office and took part in the Scavangers' strike in Howrah(1928)[37]. According to another report, the party in its programme published in February 1927 decided to join the Congress and pursue the policy of class struggle through that body. In June Muzaffar Ahmed was elected to the executive body.[38] The party began to organise the working classes on both side of the Ganges, started trade unions among the jute mill workers and railwaymen. Perhaps its best performance was the organisation of a procession of 50 thousand people to the Congress pandal in 1928 in Calcutta, pressing for the demand of complete independence. This gave a boost to the revolutionaries and the left force in the Congress.[39]

A section of the revolutionaries headed by Santosh Mitra drew up a socialist programme and organised the first socialist congress in 1928, during the All India Congress Session in Calcutta. After this meeting, Santosh Mitra started a Socialist Youth League which included many revolutionaries like Jyotish Ghosh, Nripen Majumder and Dhiren Bagchi of Calcutta, Jatin Das of Bhowanipur (Calcutta) and Sachi Ganguli of Nadia. This League took active part in the strikes and struggles of the jute workers during 1928-29 in and around Calcutta.[40]

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37 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy, Part I.

38 R.E.A., Ray : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st January to 30th June, 1927, p. 15.

39 Radharaman Mitra : interview with the author, Calcutta, October 1968.

40 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy, Part I.

Another group of revolutionaries led by Aghore Sen, Badal Ganguly, Jashoda Bhowmick and Gouri Banerjee started Samyavadi Party in Calcutta which at first consisted of the H.R.A.members; later on revolutionaries of other groups joined it.[41]

Another notable organisation of the time was the All-Bengal Youth Organisation, the leadership of which was in the hands of the extreme revolutionaries.[42]

These revolutionaries who may be styled as 'Terro-Communists' could not ignore the importance of the youth movement. Dharani Goswami, before his arrest in the Meerat Conspiracy Case, established Young Comrades' League which included a large number of revolutionaries.[43] According to an official report, a number of youth associations sprang up under various names and all of them were influenced either by the Anushilan or by the Jugantar or by the communists.[44] The students too were organised as a potentially revolutionary force. The Calcutta Students Association had come into existence in 1924; in 1928 it came to be known as the All Bengal Students' Association (A.B.S.A.)[45]. In September 1928, Jawharlal Nehru presided over its conference in Calcutta. Niranjan Sen, a prominent Anushilanite delivered the welcome address. 200 delegates were present, including revolutionaries like Satya Baksi and

41 Ibid.
42 Home (Pol) File 212/1930, N.A.I.
43 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy, Part I.
44 Home (Pol) File 212/1930, N.A.I.
45 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy, Part I.

Manoranjan Gupta, communists like Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta and left nationalists like Subhas Chandra Bose.[46] In his presidential address, Nehru gave a call to start a "campaign on communistic lines against the present form of Government."[47] This conference passed a resolution voicing the demand for complete independence. A government report admitted that within 1928 the A.B.S.A. spread throughout the districts and revolutionaries played a prominent role at local levels.[48] All these trends mentioned above converged in the pandal of the Calcutta Congress in 1928 with a new war-cry : complete independence for India.

III

Calcutta Congress, 1928 and the Bengal revolutionaries

India in 1928 was in a ferment. Strikes and other forms of working-class struggle were sweeping the country. There were 203 strikes involving 505,000 workers.[49] The Congress decision of boycotting the Simon Commission unleashed a fresh wave of enthusiasm among the younger elements and there was thunder in the air. Against this background, the A.I.C.C. met in its annual conference in Calcutta in December 1928. The main issue before that session was whether to accept the recommendations of the All Parties' Conference (February 1928) as embodied in the Nehru Report which declared Dominion Status as the goal of India.

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46 Ibid.
47 Home (Pol) File 212/1930, N.A.I.
48 Ibid.
49 Bipan Chandra, Amalesh Tripathi, Barun De : Freedom Struggle; Delhi, 1972, p. 154.

On this occasion, revolutionaries from all over India from the Anushilan and the Jugantar to the H.R.A. assembled in Calcutta. All the revolutionary groups except that of Bepin Ganguli were under the control of an executive body composed of leaders of the Anushilan and the Jugantar.[50] A para-military volunteer corps was organised with Subhas Chandra Bose as Supreme Commander or G.O.C. There were other claimants for this post. The Madaripur group put forward the name of Purna Das; the Anushilan wanted Pratul Ganguli; the Mymensingh group proposed the name of Suren Ghosh. Disagreement and misunderstanding prevailed among the parties over this issue. Finally the decision was clinched in favour of Subhas Chandra Bose.[51] The battalion was divided into five companies under five majors viz., Jatin Das of the H.R.A., Pratul Bhattacharya of the Anushilan, Panchanan Ghakraborty of the Madaripur group, Ganesh Ghosh of the Chittagong group and Satya Gupta of the Dacca Sri Sangha. Benoy Roy of Bhowanipur H.R.A. became the quartermaster.[52] Purna Das and Hari Kumar Chakraborty became lieutenants; Rabi Sen became orderly officer to the G.O.C.[53] Of these volunteers Satya Gupta's group was by far the best disciplined and Subhas Chandra Bose wanted them to form his bodyguard. But they refused to accept orders from anyone other than Satya Gupta. Though there was apparent discipline in the volunteer organisation, it lacked cohession and unity. The volunteers

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50 R.E.A., Ray : Report of the Dacca Sri Sangha upto 1929, B.G. Press, 1932, p. 19.
51 Narayan Bandopadhyay: Biplaber Sandhane, 1st ed. Calcutta, 1967, pp. 146-147.
52 Benoy Roy : Jailkhana Anya Prithibi, p.9.
53 Narayan Bandopadhyay : op. cit., p.147.

of the Anushilan and the Jugantar began to quarrel among themselves; the Anushilan volunteers refused to obey the Jugantar leaders and vice-versa. There was much dissatisfaction over the camp arrangements too. Satya Gupta was arrested by Subhas Chandra Bose for acting contrary to military discipline.He threatened to leave the camp with his 500 followers.At last Subhas Chandra Bose had to come to terms with him.[54]

Narayan Bandopadhyay, who was present at the Congress,held a very poor opinion about the performances of the dadas and their rank and file. He accused the dadas of petty intrigues and mutual wranglings over the management of kitchen,exhibitions and other committees wherefrom "two pice" might be collected.Suren Ghosh's group and Purna Das's group came to blows over the control of the kitchen. Bandopadhyay accused the Jugantar of financial irregularities and dishonesty.The Anushilan became furious as they were excluded from every kind of work where money was involved. Bandopadhyay even charged the Jugantar of putting out the lights of the exhibition in order to loot the sale proceeds.[55] The author, however, has not been able to secure any corroborative evidence in support of these charges.

Let us now come to the principal debate that rocked the Calcutta Congress : Dominion Status or Independence. It may be recalled that on this question both Subhas Chandra Bose and younger Nehru had given their consent to the Nehru Report (Lucknow, August, 1928) which opted for Dominion Status.

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54 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Dacca Sri Sangha upto 1929, p. 19.

55 Narayan Bandopadhyay : op.cit., p. 147.

But when Subas returned to Calcutta, the revolutionaries of all shades met him; he was convinced that being a spokesman of the left, he must move an amendment demanding complete independence for India in the forthcoming Calcutta Congress.Accordingly, Subhas Chandra Bose,being backed by the revolutionaries of all groups, moved an amendment in support of complete independence as against Gandhiji's official resolution advocating Dominion Status.[56] After a stormy debate,the official resolution was passed by 1350 to 973 votes, with 48 abstentions.[57] Gandhiji, realising the mood of the yourger elements, declared on the next day that he himself would move a resolution demanding complete indeperdence in the next annual session of the Congress in 1929,if his demand for Dominion Status was not conceded in the meanwhile.Thus appeased,the revolutionaries gave him a thunderous ovation.[58]

IV

The Revolt Group and splinter groups of the Anushilan and the Jugantar

During the Calcutta Session of the Congress when most of the leaders of all the revolutionary parties were in Calcutta, a fresh attempt was made to forge unity among them.The process had begun earlier in 1924,but had been aborted because of the incarceration of the leaders. According to Dr.Jadugopal Mukherjee,the idea of a

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56 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with the author,Calcutta, January, 1975.

57 Swadeshi Bazar,Chandernagar, 1st year, 19th issue,5 January, 1929. Arun Guha wrongly accused the Anushilan of voting in favour of the main resolution vide his book Aurobindo and Jugantar, p. 60.

58 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with the author.

merger came to his mind while he was detained in the Midnapore Jail. In the Midnapore Jail (1927),16 leaders of the Anushilan and the Jugantar expressed their desire of merging the two parties as they had one identical goal. In the unity talks that followed, the Jugantar was represented by Suren Ghosh and Manoranjan Gupta and the Anushilan by Trailokya Chakraborty, Rabi Sen and Pratul Ganguli.[59] According to Narayan Bandopadhyay, the second round of unity talks was held for three consecutive days in his mess in central Calcutta in 1927, after the leaders came out of prison.In all,20 leaders like Dr.Jadugopal,Manoranjan Gupta, Bhupati Majumder of the Jugantar, Purna Das of Madaripur Jugantar, Girin Banerjee of the Atmonnoti, Rabi Sen and Pratul Ganguli of the Anushilan took part in this discussion.[60] Though the leaders promised to work as a united party, no positive and concrete step was taken in that direction.But the urge for unity and for concerted actions felt by the rank and file could not be ignored.

In response to that growing urge from below,the leaders of the Anushilan and the Jugantar agreed in August 1928 upon amalgamation and formed a council of 10 consisting of Arun Guha,Purna Das, Manoranjan Gupta, Satish Chakraborty,Suren Ghosh,Bhupen Datta of the Jugantar and Satis Pakrasi, Nalini Ghosh,Madan Bhowmick and Kedarswar Sen of the Anushilan. Rabi Sen was sent to Dacca

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59 Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee : op.cit., pp. 500 - 502.

60 Narayan Bandopadhyay : op. cit., pp. 141 - 142.

about this time for a talk with Hem Ghosh in order to obtain the support of Anil Roy's Sri Sangha.[61] According to an intelligence report, a unity conference was held in Bhabesh Nandi's house at which Rabi Sen, Hem Ghosh, Nalini Ghosh, Madan Bhowmick, Anil Roy, Bhabesh Nandi, Satya Gupta, Bhupen Rakshit Roy and Manindra Ray of Sri Sangha were present. Every one except Anil Roy was in favour of amalgamation. Anil Roy argued that he could not agree to the proposal until he knew the exact programme of the proposed amalgamated party. Secondly, he declined to place his cadre at the disposal of others and thirdly, he could not overcome his deep-seated antagonism against the Dacca Anushilan.62.

Purnananda Das Gupta, an important Anushilanite, put forward some plausible explanations for the failure of the unity talks between the Anushilan and the Jugantar : (a) Misunderstanding arose among the leaders as to who would constitute the central executive. The Anushilan demanded that no one who had confessed to the police should be in the executive. They specifically raised objections about Arun Guha. (b) The Jugantar members declined to obey the Anushilan leaders; the Jugantar, being a loose federation, refused to deposit its arms with the central executive. (c) Mutual jealousies and petty party interests -- all combined to frustrate the move for amalgamation.[63]

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61 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Dacca Sri Sangha upto 1929, p. 12.
62 Ibid, pp. 12-13.
63 Purnananda Das Gupta : interview with the author.

As noted earlier, another attempt was made during the Calcutta Congress of December 1928 to forge unity but that too failed as the leaders were more interested in keeping their separate party identities than in building up a centralised unified party.[64] After the Congress, a further attempt at unity was made, this time at the district level. In May 1929, during the annual foundation day ceremony of Sankar Math at Barisal, district leaders of the Jugantar met with Hem Ghosh who had parted company with Sri Sangha and was to form the Bengal Volunteers (B.V.). The local Anushilan, though invited, did not turn up.[65] Again in July 1929, during the Barisal District Youth Conference, Hem Ghosh pleaded for unity between the Anushilan and the Jugantar. But Suren Ghosh objected and recounted several instances of the Dacca Anushilan's breach of faith and declared that any compromise was out of the question.[66] In that meeting an All-Bengal Jugantar was formed with a central council with Suren Ghosh, Purna Das, Manoranjan Gupta, Bhupen Datta, Hem Ghosh, Surjya Sen and others. It decided to start a campaign of violence.[67]

During the Lahore Congress in December 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru made serious efforts to iron out the differences between the Anushilan and the Jugantar. He called upon Suren Ghosh and Pratul Ganguli to work in harmony; but all attempts failed due to the stiff attitude of Suren Ghosh.[68]

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64 Ganesh Ghosh : 'Biplab Tirtha Chattogram and the Armed Uprising of 1930', The Contemporary, Vol. XIX, No.3, Delhi, March 1976, p. 23.
65 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Dacca Sri Sangha, p.15.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy, Part I.

According to an official report, Pratul Ganguli approached Anil Roy, Bhabesh Nandi and Satya Gupta to work jointly. Anil Roy said that he would agree if the Anushilan guaranteed equal share of firearms.The unity talk fell through after this.[69]

With the breakdown of unity talks among the dadas, the younger elements of the respective parties became once again restive. The Anushilan psychologically leaning towards socialism, suspended the programme of violence in favour of an all-India uprising in future.The Jugantar dadas, with few exceptions, joined the Congress politics.[70] The activities of the dadas, their growing apathy towards violent mode of struggle and finally their sordid quarrels for loaves and fishes as seen during the Calcutta Congress, disgusted the younger elements who wanted a new dynamic leadership. According to Brojen Das, an Anushilanite, the younger elements grew tired of the long inaction of the dadas, and met to discuss their future plan of action.[71]

In 1929 Niranjan Sen, Satish Pakrasi, Pratul Bhattacharya, Brojen Das, Jagadish Chatterjee and some Jugantar activists of Barisal, the Chittagong group under Surjya Sen and a section of the B.V. of Dacca revolted against and broke away from their respective parties and formed the Revolt Group even as the young activists had formed the New Violence Party in 1925.

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69 R.E.A.,Ray:Report on the Dacca Sri Sangha upto 1929,p.17.
70 Tarapada Lahiri:'The Eventful Dacade',Freedom Struggle and the Anushilan Samiti,Vol.I, p. 241.
71 Brojendra Chandra Das:Anushilan Samitir Biplab Prayas, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1977, pp. 72-73.

But this time their horizon had been widened by a study of the history of the Irish Rebellion, particularly Dan Breen's My Fight For Freedom which was now their gospel.[72] The party was strengthened by further defections from the parent bodies viz., the Barisal group under Saroj Chakraborty, the Narayanganj group under Satin Roy, the Rajsahi group under Anil Batabyal, the Mymensingh group under Dakshina Majumder, the Murshidabad group under Tara Bhusan Roy and the Pabna group under Amulya Lahiri.[73]

In Barisal Niranjan Sen recruited members from the Jugantar; important among them were Mahendra Roy, Sachin Kar Gupta, Nayan Ranjan Das Gupta, Sudhir Aich, Rabindra Bose, Mukul Sen and Nalini Das.[74] The young activists of the B.V. and Sri Sangha under Satya Gupta and Bhupen Raksit Roy joined the Revolt Group.[75] The Chittagong group under Surjya Sen and his comrades-in-arms, the Madaripur group under Panchanan Chakraborty, the Bhowanipur group under Jatin Das and Benoy Roy joined this organisation.[76] The party also established links with the U.P. and the Punjab revolutionaries through Bhagat Singh, who had come to attend the Calcutta Congress in disguise after killing Saunders, the British officer responsible for Lala Lajpat Rai's death. Thus the vision of a countrywide uprising began to cast a magic spell upon the revolutionaries throughout north India.[77]

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72 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Activities of Terrorists in Bengal from the period during April - December, 1930, B.G.Press, 1933, p.10. Also Brojendra Chandra Das : op.cit., p. 73.

73 Ibid., p. 69.

74 Ibid.

75 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Dacca Sri Sangha upto 1929, p.3.

76. Jagadish Chatterjee: 'Revolt Group'; Agnijug, 1st ed. ed. by Sailesh De, Calcutta, 1978, p. 97.

77 Brojendra Chandra Das : op.cit., p. 72.

Inspired by the restive mood of the younger group as manifested in the Calcutta Congress, the U.P. revolutionaries decided to strike. When the Bill of Public Safety was being discussed in the Central Legislature, Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Datta of the H.S.R.A.exploded a smoke bomb inside the House in April 1929 and courted arrest. This led to a massive man hunt all over U.P. and Bengal and the institution of the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case. Jatin Das, an accused in this case died of hunger strike in September 1929. His heroic death electrified the youth in general and definitely gave a tremendous boost to the Revolt Group, who tired of inaction of their leaders, opted for violence.[78]

Earlier, during the Bengal Provincial Political Conference at Rangpur in early 1929, Jatin Das, Satis Pakrasi,Niranjan Sen, Ambika Chakraborty, Pratul Bhattacharya, Benoy Roy and other leaders of the Revolt Group had decided to start preparations for bringing about a simultaneous rising in three districts by attacking the treasury and armoury and assassinating executive heads.[79] Their idea was to try and imitate the Irish model : if they could occupy a district even for one brief hour and then be killed in action, this would create a tremendous impact on the country. Nirenjan Sen procured a considerable quantity of arms through a smuggler and this cost twenty to thirty thousand rupees.[80]

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78 Joydeb Kapoor,Shiv Verma and Dr.Gayaprasad:interviews with the author, Kanpur, March, 1971.

79 D.I.G., I.B.Bengal File 1923 on Niranjan Sen Gupta. Also Brojendra Chandra Das : op.cit., p. 73.

80 Ibid.

But before anything tangible could be attempted, the Calcutta police on 18 December 1929 raided the haunt of Niranjan Sen at 85 Mechuabazar Street in Calcutta and arrested him, Satis Pakrasi and Kamen Biswas. On the following day, Sudhangshu Das Gupta, who arrived there from Barisal with a suitcase loaded with bomb shells, was also arrested. By raiding the haunt and other houses, the police seized leaflets, books on revolution and a detailed idea of the organisation of the party viz.,(a) district organisation, (b) explosives, (c) finance, (d) volunteer organisation, (e) spy system, (f) communication and (g) resources and force.[81] Seizing a list of members and sympathisers from the person of Satis Pakrasi, the police started making arrests in Dacca,Barisal, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Nadia, Murshidabad, Khulna,Jalpaiguri, Bihar, Orissa, Delhi and Central Province,[82] and instituted the Mechuabazar Conspiracy Case against 32 persons and all were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment.

In spite of this setback, the revolutionaries remained unaffected. We learn from a government report that sometime in February 1930, Santosh Mitra called a meeting of the representatives of various sections of revolutionaries at Tarun Sangha in Kalighat, Calcutta.The meeting was attended by Benoy Roy of Bhowanipur, Santosh Mitra of central Calcutta, Dhiren Mukherjee of Domejur,Howrah, Agam Datta and Jiban Maity of Howrah, Pannalal Mukherjee and Sachi Ganguli of Nadia,Nripen Mukherjee of Halisahar,

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81 Home (Pol) File 79/1930, W.B.S.A.

82 Ibid.

24 Parganas, Pannalal Mitra, Nripen Majumder and Anukul Mukherjee of Calcutta and Pravas Lahiri of Pabna. Santosh Mitra was strongly in favour of amalgamation of various groups but warned that before undertaking acts of violence, they should first build up the party on a strong foundation. Pannalal Mukherjee was in favour of immediate violence.[83] Provas Lahiri pleaded for procurement of arms and ammunition and promotion of unrest among peasants and workers with the aim of training them up in the use of arms for a general insurrection.[84] Others were in favour of forming small groups for insurrection with the firm resolve to court death in carrying out their task. Santosh Mitra promised to supply any quantity of arms for that purpose. An amalgamated group was thus formed with some persons present, e.g., Agam Datta, Gajendra Bhaduri, Abdul Momin and Hiren Bagchi.[85]

The revolutionaries in other parts of Bengal too, as evidence at hand suggests, were on the move. By early 1930, Panchanan Chakraborty in Madaripur, Pratul Bhattacharya in Dacca, Sourabh Ghosh in Mymensingh, Saroj Chakraborty in Barisal, Dhiresh Roy and others in Dacca and Bejoy Banerjee in Faridpur were actively engaged in reorganising their forces. In February, the leaders met in Dacca and decided that Benoy Roy and Pratul Bhattacharya would be in charge of collection of arms; Sourabh Ghosh would be in charge of the commission of dacoities; Brojen Das and Satin Roy would be in charge of making explosive and Prabhat

83 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy Part I.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.

Chakraborty of Comilla would be in charge of imparting training to the cadres.[86] Pratul Bhattacharya went to Chittagong and had an elaborate discussion with Ganesh Ghosh about the proposed risings. But the Chittagong group did not give him any inkling of their plan about the Armoury Raid which was only a few weeks away.[87]

Since the Chittagong uprising has been discussed elsewhere at some length, the fate of the splinter groups after the large-scale arrests of 1930 is briefly narrated here.

(1) Benoy Roy's Group : Benoy Roy was arrested on 21 April 1930. He sent instruction from jail that the party should remain quiet until his release. But the group began talks with the Calcutta branch of the Punjab Nawjawan Bharat Sabha about planning an uprising on 9 or 10 May 1930. But the arrest of nine of its members under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act dispersed and demoralised the group.[88]

(2) Jatindra Smriti Mandir Group : Under the leadership of Ramen Bose, it conspired to undertake action in June in Calcutta and collected arms towards that end.[89]

(3) Manindra Sil's Group of Central Calcutta : This group planned to murder Tegart with the help of some absconders from Bihar and Orissa. But with Manindra's arrest in October, the plan fell through[90].

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86 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Activities of Terrorists in Bengal during the period April-December, 1930, p.62.
87 Ibid., p. 63.
88 Ibid., p.
89 Ibid., p. 66
90 Ibid.

(4) Jatiya Yubak Sangha of North Calcutta : Keshab Chakraborty, the leader of this group together with Manindra Sil brought some persons from outside to kill Tegart. But they did not succeed in their mission.[91]

(5) Bibhuti Ganguli's Group : Bibhuti was arrested in April 1930. After him, Keshab Chakraborty, leader of the group together with Biswanath Mukherjee of south Calcutta drew up a plan for murdering I.B. officers.[92]

(6) Jessore-Khulna Youth Association : This group led by Pramatha Bhowmick was conspiring with Naw Jawan Bharat Sabha to create a reign of terror in Calcutta by attacking hotels and cinemas. In August 1930 during the trial of Mechuabazar case, Niranjan Sen handed over a formula for making bombs to Bhowmick through one Nirmal Kanti Roy Chaudhuri. Bhowmick went to Salkia to fix a place for manufacturing bombs but he was arrested there. With his arrest, this group became inactive.[93]

(7) Barisal Group : Led by Saroj Chakraborty and Jatin Roy (alias Fega) it successfully won over most of the Anushilan workers to this group including some Jugantar militants and decided to organise an uprising. But the plan fell through as most of its members were apprehended.[94]

(8) Dacca Group and the North Bengal Group : The Revolt Group of Dacca contemplated on a bigger action. Satin Roy and Brojen Das met Jitesh Lahiri, leader of the north Bengal group at

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91 Ibid., p. 67.
92 Ibid., p. 63.
93 D.I.G., I.B., Bengal File 1929 on Pramatha Bhowmick
94 R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Activities of Terrorists in Bengal during the period April-December, 1930, p. 70.

Rajsahi in April 1930 and decided to organise an armed uprising in north Bengal, particularly in Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Dhubri. But the arrests of Satin Roy, Brojen Das, Prabhat Chakraborty and others like Jitesh Lahiri of Rajshahi, Manindra Lahiri of Pabna, Susil Deb, Nalini Bagchi, Sibdas Lahiri, Paresh Guha, Biren Das Gupta of Rangpur and Biren Datta of Jalpaiguri by the end of May frustrated all the plans of the Dacca group and the north Bengal group.[95]

(9) Mymensingh Grcup : It hoped to organise a similar rising in Mymensingh and planned to murder the D.M., S.P. and Intelligence Branch officers. It had links with Bani Sevak Sangha of Dacca (a splinter group of the Anushilan formed in 1925), Saroj Chakraborty of Barisal, Rajsahi group, Pabna group and Murshidabad group. But the arrest of the leaders of the above-mentioned groups in the early months of 1930 practically nipped the plan in the bud.[96]

(10) Faridpur Group : This group under the leadership of Panchanan Chakraborty had planned for an insurrection in Madaripur. But by the first week of June 1930 when Panchanan Chakraborty and nine others were arrested, their dream lay in ruins.[97]

The zeal of the Revolt Group gradually wore itself out. It failed even as its forerunner, the N.V.P., had failed a few years earlier. But the differences between the two cannot be

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95 Ibid., pp. 73, 75.
96 Ibid., p. 74
97 Ibid.

obscured by the common fate that overtook them. The N.V.P. functioned in an atmosphere of general political demoralisation when hopes about the future were dim. It had a handful of followers and its resources were meagre. Its plans could not, therefore, rise above mediocrity and its achievements too did not set any horizon on fire. But the Revolt Group came into being and functioned when there was already a high tide in the national movement and the millennium seemed to be in sight. With greater awareness of the issues involved and with a larger following at its call, it dared more boldly and its recovery from repeated setbacks was relatively quicker. Even though it ultimately failed, it raised sharper echoes that reached far and wide. But perhaps we are somewhat anticipating events and hinting at what would happen in the mid-30s in jails, detention camps and in the distant Andamans -- the emergence of the Communist Consolidation.

V

Calcutta Corporation and Bengal Revolutionaries

We have seen that the Bengal revolutionaries had close links with the Swarajya Party and since the capture of the Calcutta Corporation by that party in 1924, they were instrumental in installing Subhas Chandra Bose as its Chief Executive Officer. After his appointment in that high office, many jobs in the

Corporation were given to the revolutionaries.[98] One of the main reasons of the capture of Corporation by the Swarajya Party, a government report indicated, was the desire to secure jobs for its supporters. With this aim in view, a large number of free primary schools were opened. In 1923-24, there were only 19 schools; in 1930-31, the number rose to 220 and in December 1932 to 225. This increase in the number of schools alarmed the government as these Corporation schools became the main centres of anti-British activities during 1930-32.[99] During his mayorship Subhas Chandra Bose favoured the employment of revolutionaries in the Corporation schools. The police reported that in 1930 Subhas Chandra Bose had instructed K.P. Chattopadhyay, the then Education Officer, to the effect that any candidate who was not a political sufferer and who would decline to pay a portion of his salary to the families of political sufferers, would not be appointed in the Corporation schools.[100] B.P.Sinha Roy,the minister for Local Self-government, in his secret note echoed the same apprehension :

"The most unfortunate thing was the election of Subhas Chandra Bose as Mayor of Calcutta. It is he who started the game

98 Home (Pol) File 4/21/1932, N.A.I.
This section V has been published by the author in a Progressive Bengali journal Parichaya,Calcutta, July, 1978.

99 Note by Bakar, Spl.Officer,Pol.Dept.dt.19 January, 1932; Home (Pol) File 126/1932,Sl. 1-8, W.B.S.A.

100 Ibid.

of appointing anarchists or ex-anarchists in the Corporation."[101] Suresh Chandra Das, a revolutionary, has corroborated this fact to the author.[102]

Some examples may be cited. On 22 August 1930, Subhasini Ganguli was arrested in Chandernagore with the Chittagong absconders. On release she was appointed as a teacher in a Corporation school at Entally.[103] Of the five councillors, at least two (namely, Dr. Narayan Roy and Bepin Ganguli) were actively involved in anti-government activities. Dr. Narayan Roy was sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment in the Dalhousie Square Bomb Case.[104] Bepin Ganguli was prosecuted in August 1931 for incitement to murder. He was,however, acquitted at the High Court Session.[105]

The influx of revolutionaries into the Corporation caused a great deal of worry to the government.In a secret letter, the Government of India wanted to know to what extent the Calcutta Corporation assisted the anti-government movement, the number of employees against whom the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act had been used and the number of revolutionaries employed in school service etc.[106]

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101 Home (Pol) File 136/1932, W.B.S.A.
102 Suresh Chandra Das : interview with the author.
103 Home (Pol) File 126/1932, Sl. 4, W.B.S.A.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 H.W. Emerson, Chief Secy., G.O.I. to the Chief Secy., Bengal, dt. 16.1.32; Ibid.

In reply to this query, the Intelligent Branch prepared a detailed document including (a) a list of councillors or aldermen who were revolutionaries or had sympathy for such anti-government movement, (b) a list of revolutionaries working in the Corporation schools (vide Appendix No.A), (c) the ways by which the Corporation gave financial help to the movement and (d) the resolutions passed by the Corporation Teachers' Union and the Employees' Union in support of the revolutionaries and the Civil Disobediance movement.[107]

It was reported that after the capture of the Corporation by the Congress, many associations sprang up to impart physical training to the youth, but really these were recruiting centres of the revolutionary parties.[108] Another report stated that according to the instructions of K.P.Chattopadhyay, arrangements were made in Corporation schools for training in lathi play, jiu-jitsu and other forms of physical culture. Balai Chatterjee of Mohun Bagan Club was appointed for that purpose on a monthly salary of Rs.125/-. Digendra Deb, a demonstrator of the Bengal Presidency Students' Association and of the Basanti Sakti Mandir, was appointed to impart lessons in physical culture to the girl students. K.P.Chattopadhyay was actively supported in this venture by two councillors, Madan Barman and Girish Sil.[109]

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107. Note by E.B.H. Baker, Spl. Officer, Special Branch, 19 January, 1932; Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. M.G.Hallet, Officer on Special Duty, Home to the Chief Secy., Bengal, 30 June 1932; Ibid.

Persons who were given appointment in the Corporation were required to contribute a portion of their pay to the "terrorist fund".[110] Similarly, contractors had to contribute to the party fund in return for large contracts.[111] It was reported that M/s A.K.Ghosh & Co. (a concern run by ex-detenu Atul Ghosh and Amar Ghosh) used to give Rs.1000/- per month to the Congress fund.Amar Ghosh in a statement to the police in 1931 confessed that he himself used to donate Rs.300-400 a year to the Congress fund in order to promote his business and to get more contracts.[112] It was also reported that K.P.Chattopadhyay, who "got into the Corporation through Subhas Bose", used to render financial help to one Moti Singh, an ex-detenu and a Corporation teacher, and also to Suresh Chandra Das to arrange shelters for the Dacca absconders and for those who would come to Calcutta for commission of acts of violence.[113] Deben De, a noted revolutionary, was appointed in the Mosquito Brigade of the Corporation. Saman, the Deputy Executive Officer,got appointed on condition that he would contribute a portion of his salary to Suren Ghosh for the purpose of revolutionary activities in Mymensingh.[114] According to the same report, the Mymensingh Jugantar received regular financial help from Dr.B.C.Roy, Mayor, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar,Councillor, and Sailen Ghoshal,Deputy License Officer of the Corporation.[115]

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110 Ibid. The Chief Secy.,Bengal to Chief Secy.,G.O.I., dt.3 June 1932;Home(Pol) File 136/1932,WBSA.
111 Note by C.W.Gurner,Secy.,Local Self-Govt.dt.27 August,1930;Home(Pol) File 672/1930,WBSA.
112 Home (Pol) File 126/1932,Sl.1-8,WBSA.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.

The Calcutta Corporation had thus become, for all practical purposes, a platform of anti-government activities. The government by 1930 levelled categorical charges against it as it was "in bad order and has disgusted all decent opinion"[116]. Since 1930 it was, therefore, in favour of introducing an ordinance to curb the power of the Corporation. But opinions differed as to how this should be done. Some favoured the appointment of an official supervisor.[117] Others were in favour of setting up a committee to probe into the affairs of the Corporation. But such kinds of official interference into the activities of the Corporation which was a self-governing institution might, it was feared, create much resentment among the public and make it still more hostile.[118]

However, after considering all the pros and cons, the government introduced a Bill to amend the Calcutta Corporation Act of 1923. The Bill proposed to debar appointment of any person in the Corporation who was convicted of an offence against the state; any convicted person who was already employed must be removed from his post.[119] Armed with this piece of legislation, the government now decided to weed out all

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116 Home (Pol) File 672/1930
117 Ibid.
118 Home (Pol) File 4/25/1932
119 Terrorism, Civil Disobedience and the Calcutta Corporation, B.G. Press, 1933 - 34, p. 1.

subversive elements from this premier self-governing institution of Bengal. But this decision could not be implemented due to circumstances well beyond its control.

Chapter V

THE CHITTAGONG REBELLION AND ITS IMPACT ON PEOPLE, POLITICS AND RULERS

I

The Calcutta Congress over (December 1928), the Chittagong revolutionaries came back to their home district, fully convinced that in spite of the assurance given by Gandhiji that a resolution in favour of independence instead of Dominion Status would be adopted in the next session (in Lahore, 1929) the compromising leadership of the national organisation would do precious little and the resolution would remain a pious platitude. So they decided to do something more substantial and thereby blaze a trail for the country's youth to follow.[1]

There was no readymade plan at hand. It was gradually beaten into shape on the anvil of what was feasible. Surjya Sen knew that unless the party had a legal cover and arms and amunition at its disposal, it could not strike at the opportune moment. With the help of the revolutionaries, he therefore got himself elected as Secretary of the district Congress; his other associates - Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Lokenath Bal, Nirmal Sen and Ambika Chakraborty - became members of its executive council. In March 1929, the

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1 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with Gautam Chattopadhyay, New Age, New Delhi, 20 April 1980.

party floated two organisations, one for students and the other for young men. A volunteer organisation was also formed into which, as Ganesh Ghosh remembers, hundreds of volunteers were enrolled; they used to parade in khaki uniform. The dream of the leaders was to build up, under the cover of this open volunteer organisation, an armed detachment of the party which in due time would blossom forth into the 'Chittagong Branch of Indian Republican Army'. This army would, when the hour of destiny struck, lead an armed struggle against the British and act as the Liberation Army of the people.[2] In March 1929, a series of conferences were held not only to forge close links with the militant sections of the youth, but also to test the people's readiness for direct action.[3]

In July, the leaders, after a prolonged discussion among themselves, drew up a very rough plan for future action. It was decided that in a few months' time, the details of the plan would be worked out in order to give it a final shape. Meanwhile, everyone was instructed to keep his mouth shut and think seriously as to how the plan could be made perfect and foolproof.[4]

The authorities in Calcutta seemed to have got some wind of these preparations. In a secret letter, the D.I.G. Bengal warned

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2 Ganesh Ghosh : 'Biplab Tirtha Chittagong and the Armed Uprising of 1930'; The Contemporary, Vol XIX, No.3, March, Delhi, 1976, p. 23.
3 Ibid., No. 4, April 1976, p. 36.
4 Ibid., p. 37.

that the Chittagong revolutionaries were plotting to take by surprise the district police and capture the treasury and the armoury. If they could sustain the attack for an hour and die in the encounter even as the Irish Rebels had died in the Easter Rising in Dublin, it would, they thought, have a tremendous effect.[5] So from November 1929, the Chittagong Police employed round-the-clock watch on the revolutionaries and this continued up to March 1930.[6] In spite of constant vigilance, the police could not get any information of the plan. The revolutionaries, on their part, also kept 24 hours' watch on the IB officers. This counter-espionage helped them, to a great extent, to hide Ram Krishna Biswas and Tarakeswar Dastidar who were severely burnt while making bombs.[7]

The plan of action, in its final form, stood as follows : first, to destroy the main centres of state power in the district by sudden and simultaneous attack on all of them; secondly, to capture and destroy the nerve-centre of the communication system - the Central Telephone Office; thirdly, to prevent army units or armed police force from rushing to Chittagong from neighbouring districts, it would be necessary to disrupt rail lines linking Chittagong with other districts and to destroy

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5 Home (Pol) File 243/1930 Part II W.B.S.A.
6 Home (Pol) File 45/1/1933 N.A.I.
7 Ganesh Ghosh : Biplabi Surjya Sen, 1st ed. Calcutta, 1976, p. 71.

the telegraphic system so that no news could be sent out. Lastly, to render local enemies (Anglo-Indians employed in different services, and their Indian hirelings) completely harmless, it might be necessary to capture them alive or to kill as many of them as possible.[8]

The leadership was sure that within a short time the authority would mount a massive counter-offensive. It must be resisted, it was decided, to the last drop of blood. The participants were told only vaguely about the new perspective. Prepare to die for the cause of freedom, was the call that was given to them. The plan was given the code name of Death Programme.[9]

A high command of five was set up with Surjya Sen (popularly known as Masterda) because of his teaching profession) at its head - the four others being Ambika Chakraborty, Ananta Singh, Nirmal Sen and Ganesh Ghosh. Masterda warned the four : "Remember, our strength lies in sudden and surprise attack. Hence the entire plan must be kept an absolute secret. No body, not even a sixth man, must know anything of the plan, or else all our efforts will be frustrated."[10]

Then began the long painful period of meticulous preparations for the impending attack. Each volunteer was given a

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8 Ganesh Ghosh : 'Biplabtirtha Chittagong and the Armed Uprising', op.cit., vol XX, No. 6, June 1976, p.35.
9 Ganesh Ghosh : Biplabi Surjya Sen, pp. 65-66.
10 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with Gautam Chattopadhyay, op. cit.

particular task to be performed within a particular date. The volunteers collected detailed information about the enemy : about the number of armed sepoys in the armoury barrack, the number of sentries on guard duties elsewhere, and so on. Information was also collected about the operation of telephone and telegraph office. Two spots were selected for sabotaging the rail lines, 60 miles and 70 miles away from Chittagong.[11]

18 April 1930, was selected as the D. Day. Ganesh Ghosh recalls that sixty-three revolutionaries were picked up after proper screening. More than half the volunteers were kept in reserve. The remaining 30 were divided into five squads of six each. One squad was to attack the Armoury - Masterda, Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Singh were in that group. Nirmal Sen and Lokenath Bal were to attack the Auxiliary Force Armoury. One squad was to attack the European Club. One squad consisting of two separate groups was formed to tear up the railway lines at two different places. Ambika Chakraborty was to attack the telegraph and telephone office. The zero hour was fixed at 10.10 p.m.[12] The plan was kept so secret that L.H.Colson, the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, had to admit that the defective intelligence had not warned the police beforehand of the exact date and timing of the rising.[13]

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Proceedings of the Civil and Military Conferences held in Government House, Calcutta, on 3rd and 4th July 1934, Sl. 32, B.G.Press, 1934-35, p. 23.

The operation began according to the plan. Ananta Singh fired at the sentry; others started firing in the air, shouting "Bhag jao, Gandhiji Ka Raj Ho Giya" (Run away, Gandhiji's raj has been established). The warning could not have been better phrased, though purists might decry it as a piece of political opportunism - advocates of armed struggle using the name of the votary of non-violence. But tactically, the warning was superbly expressed and perfectly timed with an immediate and spectacular effect. With the rising tide of the Civil Disobedience movement spearheaded by Gandhiji, the fight for freedom of any type had come to be associated in the mass mind with the name of the Mahatma. There was increasing apprehension in the ranks of the government and the revolutionaries took full advantage of the situation. In the darkness of night, their warning rang out like a clap of thunder and the guards were scattered like dry leaves before a gale. Leaving the barrack empty, some 500 policemen ran helter-skelter and within five minutes the armoury was captured.[14] Soon they joined Ambika Chakraborty who successfully destroyed the telegraph line and set it on fire. The Auxiliary Force Armoury was stormed where Sergeant-Major Farell tried to resist but was bayonetted to death by Tegra, a young lad of 13.[15]

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14 Ananta Singh : Chttagram Juba Vidroha, vol.I, 2nd ed, Calcutta, 1968, p.92. Vide Appendix B for number of arms and ammunition looted by the revolutionaries, recovered by the police and apprehended by the authorities to be still with the revolutionaries.

15 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with Gautam Chattopadhya, op.cit.

The revolutionaries were in a jubilant mood. Surjya Sen standing amidst his followeres proclaimed the independence of Chittagong. Next day, they circulated two printed leaflets in Chittagong as also in other parts of Bengal -- one leaflet proclaimed the independence of Chittagong in the name of the Indian Republican Army, with Surjya Sen as the President of the Provisional Republic of Free India; the second leaflet appealed to the students and youth to join the Indian Republican Army.[16]

For some four days, the British administration in Chittagong remained completely paralysed. Under instructions from Surjya Sen, all those who had participated in the raids withdrew to the Jalalabad Hills. On 22 April, the British and Gurkha troops, receiving an information from a cowboy, launched a counter-attack. It was an unequal battle at Jalalabad Hills. In the day-long encounter that followed, the revolutionaries lost 12 lives as against 82 of the British.[17]

Under the cover of darkness, the surviving revolutionaries dispersed in batches. Clashes followed during escapes resulting in fresh casualties : the Fenni incident (23 April 1930) where Ganesh Ghosh, Ananta Singh and others stormed their way through the police cordon; the Kalarpole incident(7 May 1930);the Dhalghat clashes (13 June 1930) in which Nirmal Sen lost his

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16 Ibid.
17 Sahayram Das : 'Chattogram Vidroha O Astragar Dakhaler Sangram',Saptahik Kalantar, Calcutta, 19 April 1980.

life; the Chandernagore skirmish (2 September 1930) in which Tegart arrested Lokenath Bal and Ganesh Ghosh; the Pahartali raid (24 September 1932) during which Preetilata fell fighting; and finally, on 16 February 1933, the arrest of Surjya Sen as a result of betrayal. With his arrest, the revolutionary activities of the Chittagong group drew to an end though sporadic attempts continued here and there for some more time.

II

The raid gave rise to mixed feelings among different sections of the people. Though official reactions were more or less predictable, non-official ones formed a curious pattern. In this section, the immediate impact of the raid on the people, as evident from reports submitted by different district magistrates within a few days of the incident and from other contemporary official reports, is now briefly stated.

To begin with, Congressmen in different districts of Bengal were taken aback "at the suddenness with which the disturbances broke out and at the enormity of the outrage committed"[18]. Some militant sections of the Congress who were

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18 A.C. Datta, DM, Faridpur to the Commissioner, Dacca Division, 22 April 1930; Home (Pol) File 243/1930, Part VII, W.B.S.A.

taking an active part in the Civil Disobedience movement vaguely suspected that the government might have had a hand in the matter so as to use it as a pretext for violently crushing the movement.[19] In general, Congressmen looked upon it as a work of agent provocateurs[20], disapproved this act of violence and denied any sympathy for it. According to the district magistrate of Murshidabad, this stand of the Congressmen was nothing but an eye-wash and was merely "a lip-deep abhorrence of the incident"[21]. This view was also shared by the magistrate of Birbhun who believed that the Civil Disobedience volunteers and Salt Satyagrahis privately approved of this act of violence and sympathised with the perpetrators.[22]

From the report of the magistrate of Noakhali it is learnt that the entire Hindu population felt secret satisfaction at the "bravery" of the raiders "who have shown themselves capable of killing and being killed for their country"23. To the Hindus of Pabna and Bogra, the news of the raid came as a welcome

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19 A.B.De, DM, Bogra to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 23 April 1930; Ibid.
20 H. Quinton, DM, Khulna to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 23 April 1930; Ibid.
21 J. M.Chatterjee, DM, Murshidabad to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 22 April 1930; Ibid.
22 N.K.Sen, DM, Birbhum to the Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 23 April 1930; Ibid.
23 B.R. Sen, DM, Noakhali to the Commissioner, Chittagong Division, 25 April 1930; Ibid.

surprise; they saw in it the beginning of the end of the British Raj.[24] More or less similar reaction was noticeable among the students and youths of Bengal to whom the Chittagong uprising was an event of great elation and pride. They denounced the policy of repression adopted by the government immediately after the raid.[25]

The law-abiding citizens of Hooghly, however, appeared to be shocked beyond measure at this "dastardly act". To them, it was the result of years of Congress preaching of sedition. But they would not speak out in public. According to the district magistrate of Hooghly, "the loyal people, though by far the most numerous, are too timid" to hold any meeting in condemnation of this act of violence.[26] The loyalists of Mymensingh were a braver lot who condemned outright the revolutionaries and gave full-throated support to all kinds of repressive measures undertaken by the government.[27]

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24 S. N. Banerjee, DM, Pabna to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 22 April 1930 & A.B.De, DM, Bogra to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 23 April 1930; Ibid.

25 G.S.Datta,DM, Mymensingh to the Commissioner, Dacca Division, 24 April, 1930 & J.M. Banerjee, DM, Bankura to the Chief Secretary, Bengal,25 April 1930; Ibid.

26 J. B. Kinderly, DM, Hooghly to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 22 April 1930; Ibid.

27 G.S. Datta, DM, Mymensingh to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 25 April 1930; Ibid.

As to the richer sections of the Bengali populace, some among them were perturbed at the gravity of the situation and started strengthening their home guards. They were prepared to extend all sorts of co-operation to the authorities.[28]

The Muslims were so alarmed and perplexed that for sometime they would not express themselves. As they regained their mental poise, they hastened to condemn the "ferocity" of the raiders. The Muslims of Pabna apprehended similar disturbances in their district.[29] In the Presidency Division, the Muslim reaction was somewhat different. They preferred to dissociate themselves from the Civil Disobedience movement.[30] The Muslims of Chittagong, as reported by the district authorities, apprehended molestation or retaliation by the revolutionaries if they did not co-operate with them; some of them hesitated to offer any assistance to the authorities.[31] It was perhaps an indirect admission of the fact that local Muslims, at least a part of them, felt a secret sympathy for the revolutionaries, as evidence mentioned in subsequent paragraphs would suggest.

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28 J.D.V. Hodge, DM, Burdwan to the Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 22 April 1930; Ibid.
29 S.N. Banerjee, DM, Pabna to the Chief Secretary, Bengal, 22 April 1930; Ibid.
30 F.W. Robertson, Commissioner, Presidency Division to the Chief Secretary,Bengal,26 April 1930; Ibid.
31 M.A. Momin, Off. Commissioner, Chittagong Division to the Chief Secretary,Bengal,25 April 1930;Ibid.

The situation after the raid was so tense and the nerves of British officials were so jittered that the administration in Chittagong frantically requested the government not to withdraw troops until the main body of absconding revolutionaries were rounded up and appealed for a permanent posting of troops, preferably British troops at Chittagong.[32] A secret report admitted that casualties and other causes had depleted the ranks of the civil service and there was shortage of good senior officers. Nervousness and lack of confidence prevented the officers from discharging their duties effectively and they had a feeling that they were losing rather than gaining ground.[33] L.H. Colson had to admit that the prestige of the government suffered " a shattering blow in the public estimation by the Chittagong Armoury Raid"[34].

The non-official Europeans were so benumbed that for days they could not express themselves.Their tension would have reached the breaking-point if further outrages or murders of non-officials had occurred.They were critical about the steps taken by the government and demanded more vigorous action against

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32 Ibid.
33 Home (Pol) File 32/14/1932, N.A.I.
34 Memo by L.H. Colson to the Chief Secretary,Bengal, 13 June 1934; Home (Pol) File 277/1934,Sl. 54, p. 1, W.B.S.A.

the "miscreants"[35]. Similar sentiments were expressed in another document, according to which, the lives of the Europeans were in danger, the executive faced continual attacks and witnesses were afraid of giving evidence; in short, the law-abiding elements were too alarmed to stand up and protest.[36]

The government, immediately after the raid, let loose an orgy of violence. It did not delay in enacting repressive legislation. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925 had expired in March 1930. The police demanded that the Act be retained permanently. Considering all the pros and cons, the government re-enacted the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment (Part continuance) Act for five years with sections relating to trial by special procedure. After the raid, fresh powers of arrests and detention were immediately conferred on the district authorities by an ordinance and this was soon replaced on 16 October 1930 by a permanent piece of legislation - Act VI of 1930. 2,167 persons were dealt with under this Act of whom 1351 were kept in jails and detention camps, 288 in village domicile, making a total of 1639 on 30 November 1933. Besides, there were 19 state prisoners under Regulation III of 1818.[37]

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35 Home (Pol) File 32/14/1932, N.A.I.
36 Home (Pol) File 4/63/1932, N.A.I.
37 R.C.Majumdar, History of Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1963, p. 501.

By the end of July 1931, the government felt so disturbed by anti-government publications containing incitement to violence that on 9 October 1931 the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act came into force, giving the authority power to stop any publication, deemed subversive. In addition to that, the Government of India promulgated Ordinance IX of 1931 on 29 October, which empowered the authority to take action against those who were either members, or helpers or sympathisers of revolutionary party[38]. Finally, after a careful consideration of the situation in Chittagong, the authority promulgated on 30 November the Bengal Emergency Power Ordinance XI of 1931 which empowered the local authority to combine military and police action to round up the revolutionaries. The district magistrates were empowered to commandeer property, issue certain restrictive orders e.g., promulgation of curfew, control of traffic etc. Chapter II of the Ordinance provided for special tribunals, special magistrates and a procedure designed to overcome routine delays. On the expiry of the Ordinance, two more laws were passed -- the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act 1932 and the Bengal Criminal Law (Arms and Explosive) Act 1932 which embodied powers conferred by the Ordinance.[39]

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38 David M. Laushey : Bengal Terrorism and Marxist Left, p. 78.

39 Home (Pol) File 4/41/1932, N.A.I.

Fully armed with all kinds of repressive weapons, the Gurkha Rifles and the Maratha Light Infantry started combing operations in Chittagong.[40] During the cold weather of 1931-32, curfew order was imposed in four thanas. By May, the police adopted a policy of regular searches of all houses reported to be used as shelters for absconders and from May 1932 to February 1933 not less than hundred houses were searched each month.[41] After the murder of Asanulla (30 August 1931), a notorious police officer, the government used this occasion for engineering communal riot in Chittagong and carried on wanton raid on private dwellings by the members of the Eastern Rifles[42]. The government succeeded only partially and for a while.

The government had to admit police excesses in executing punitive measures.[43] It appointed an enquiry committee but did not dare publish its report. It only censured the officers who were found guilty.[44] The Government of India,perhaps suffering from a sense of guilt, proposed to give compensation to the victims. But the local authorities did not approve of it on various grounds. Firstly,this grant of compensation would be

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40 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl. 22, p.3, W.B.S.A.
41 Home (Pol) File 45/7/1933, N.A.I.
42 B.N.Sasmal and others : Report of the Non-official Enquiry Committee on recent disturbances in Chittagong, September 1931, Calcutta, 1931, p.6.
43 Report on the Disturbances in Chittagong in August, 1931 and following days, B.G.Press,1931, p.23.
44 Home (Pol) File 737/1931, W.B.S.A.

regarded as sign of weakness on the part of the government. Secondly, the revolutionaries would look upon it as a victory for themselves. Thirdly, the Muslims and the Europeans would be perturbed and this would give rise to a new set of problems. Lastly, the growing confidence among the government officers would be shaken by this proposed appeasement.[45]

Ultimately, the opinion of the local administration prevailed as would be evident from the subsequent narrative. After the Dhalghat incident, a collective fine of Rs.5000 was imposed on the villagers and a platoon of Eastern Rifles was quartered in that locality. Even after the Pahartali incident, a heavy fine of Rs.80,000 was imposed on the local Hindus to make them realise "that their interests were to suffer as long as the local campaign against terrorism continued unsuccessful."[46]

From March 1932, apart from imposing collective fines and carrying out cordons and searches, the authority issued other punitive orders, especially on the Hindus: curfew was imposed on all Hindu young men in certain areas requiring them to remain in their houses from sunset to sunrise; use of cycles without permit was prohibited; the movement of all traffic at

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45 Ibid.

46 Home (Pol) File 45/7/1933, N.A.I.

night in the vicinity of European and Anglo-Indian quarters was prohibited.[47]

This was not all. In order to bring pressure on schools, a 25% cut in the grant of all aided schools was imposed until such time as the district magistrate could be sure that the boys were no longer under evil influence.[48] All these measures aimed at depriving the revolutionaries of any kind of local support and thus crushing them with relative ease.

An attempt was made during this period to introduce "group" system in all aided schools and colleges. This system compelled the teachers to exercise supervision over the boys even after school hours. Teachers were asked to visit the guardians and enquire how their wards were behaving, with whom they were mixing etc. A government report admitted that the guardians looked upon this system with suspicion because "the guardians for the most part are still in secret or open sympathy with the terrorists".[49]

Steps were also taken to form an organisation of the guardians - The Chittagong Anti-Terrorist Organisation. It consisted of Hindu bhadralok parents and guardians and it operated in the Hindu villages of the Anushilan and the Jugantar areas.[50]

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl.22, p. 23, W.B.S.A.
50 Ibid., p. 24.

Village Committees were also set up to keep watch on the behaviour of the youth. The Committees issued cards to the youth.If a holder was away from home,he was asked to leave the card at home and "this is primafacie a certificate that his house will be exempt from search when the police and military are searching a village for absconder. Complete lists of card-holders and specimen cards have been supplied to all military posts"[51].Young members of the Buddhist Community were found to be in secret sympathy with the revolutionary movement. So a Buddhist Anti-Terrorist Organisation was established in 25 Buddhist villages.[52] Similarly,the Muslims had organised a Young Muslim Self-Reliance League with the aim of issuing anti-terrorist leaflets and addressing meetings.[53]

Two more orders were issued in July 1932 under the provision of the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act 1932. The first order required all Hindu male bhadralok between the ages of 12 and 25 in the areas of Double Moorings,Boalkhali and Patiya to carry identity cards.[54] White cards were issued to those upon whom no special watch was necessary, blue cards to those who had been dealt with under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act; and those who were living in home or village domicile were issued red cards. Up to November 1933, in eight

51 Ibid., p. 27
52 Ibid., p. 28
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., Sl. 22, p. 42, Vide Appendix C for Map of Chittagong showing military operations in the Anushilan and the Jugantar areas.

thanas 14,081 white cards, 77 blue cards and 15 red cards were issued.[55] The introduction of this system enabled the police to check persons coming in and going out of Chittagong by train or boat, or moving on feet. The second order required the Hindu students to read only in those schools which were within 3 miles of their residence. This prevented members of the party from extending their influences in schools widely distributed.[56]

The government employed various types of agents - the first being the agents inside the party. The second type was termed as casual agent who helped in locating the absconders. The police claimed that the whereabouts of Kalpana Datta and Tarakeswar Dastidar in Gairala were reported by a party member but he did not locate the place. A casual agent of Gairala then supplied the detailed information. As a result both were arrested. There was another type of casual agents, called the living agents who served as links between all kinds of sources and the district intelligence.[57] The district intelligence officers were ordered to walk at least 2 miles away from their camp to meet their sources in disguise. These meetings were to be held during the "hours of darkness" and "during the time of meeting curfew must be imposed

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55 Ibid.
56 Home (Pol) File 605/1934. Home (Pol) Dept.,W.Bengal Secretariat.
57 Home (Pol) File 272/1934. Sl. 22, pp.32-34,W.B.S.A.

so that people must not come out at night and troops must be trolled to keep the terrorists out of the areas selected for meeting"[58].

During Surjya Sen's confinement in the Chittagong jail, a plan was hatched by his comrades for his rescue.The plan somehow leaked out and the authorities were panicky. There arose a general demand from the commissioners and district officers of Bengal to remove all the detenus out of the province,preferably to the far-off Andamans as this would stop conspiracy and would subject the detenus to stricter discipline.[59] These recommendations were soon embodied in the amended Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act; 100 detenus from all over Bengal were sent to the Deoli camp in 1932 and two batches of prisoners totalling 58 were deported to the Andamans.[60]

A government report observed that up to April 1934, 78 members of both the Jugantar and the Anushilan had become police agents, 127 had become detenus and 141 had been convicted under Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act and other laws,of whom seven were sentenced to imprisonment for four to seven years and two were executed.[61] As a result of all these,the polical

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58 Ibid., p. 36
59 Home (Pol) File 4/65/1933, N.A.I.
60 Report on the Administration of Bengal,1931-32, Calcutta, 1933, p. XIX.
61 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, p. 19, W.B.S.A. See also Appendix D for graph showing progress in obtaining sources and arresting absconders and recovering weapons from January 1933 - April 1934.

situation in Bengal in general and Chittagong in particular changed so much that a government note recorded in a triumphant mood :

" ... up to 1931 it was very difficult to get magistrates and judges to serve on Special Tribunals or as Special Magistrates ... some magistrates used to say ... 'for God's sake get me out of this because my wife is very much against the idea'. But after the arrival of troops, instead of officers hesitating to serve as special magistrates, it became a matter of emulation with them..."[62]

III

For nearly three years, from April 1930 to Surjya Sen's arrest in February 1933, the Chittagong revolutionaries carried on heroic, though unequal, battles against the British authorities. Was there any popular support behind them? Ganesh Ghosh's emphatic reply to this question is that had there been no popular support it would have been impossible for Surjya Sen and his valiant comrades to have remained underground in Chittagong itself

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62 Proceedings of the Civil and Military Conference held in Government House, Calcutta on 3rd and 4th July, 1934, p. 11.

for so long.[63] Actually after the raid, the attitude of the middle class of Chittagong turned almost overnight into one of admiration for the heroes and they gave them all kinds of help - shelter, money and legal defence.According to a secret report,the revolutionaries enjoyed support from the population who usually warned them beforehand about the approach of the forces. Surjya Sen became a legendary figure and was worshipped as a god by his followers and looked upon as a hero by a large section of the population.[64]

Another report had to admit that the Hindu land-owners discouraged the people from giving information to the police regarding the rebel's whereabouts.The report adds that the Hindus did not co-operate with the authorities on account of sympathy for the rebels; nor did the Muslims who felt that since the government was no longer an effective force, it would be unwise to incur the displeasure of the Hindus.[65]

To what extent did the heroism of the revolutionaries touch the minds of the people will be evident from a few incidents. In May 1930, during the Kalarpole clash, the villagers helped the police in chasing Debaprasad and three others taking them for mere daccits. This resulted in their death. When the villagers

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63 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with the author.
64 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl.53, p.3,W.B.S.A.
65 J. C. Farmer, Deputy Inspector of Police,Burdwan Range to Lowman, I.G. Police, 6 May 1930; Home (Pol) File 243/30,Part V, W.B.S.A.

came to know the real identities of the deceased, they repented and wept in sorrow.[66] During the Chandernagore raid by Tegart, people collected at both ends of the lane, obstructed the police and adopted a threatening attitude. "Their demeanour throughout was insolent and antagonistic.."[67]. A secret official note admitted "the fact that even the Muslims and the Buddhists have been drawn into the movement is an indication of the virulent nature of the infection..."[68] According to another report, the Muslims had to be carefully handled; unless properly patronised and supported, they, as the authorities apprehended, might join the enemy camp.[69]

It had been the practice of earlier revolutionary leaders to emphasise the performances of certain Hindu religious rites at the time of initiating their recruits. Such practices kept the Muslims away from the revolutionary movement in most of the districts. But the Chittagong group shunned all religious practices and succeeded in drawing a number of Muslim young men into their fold. These boys performed their duties no less energetically than their Hindu counterparts.[70]

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66 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with the author.
67 Charles Tegart to Chief Secy., Bengal, 2 September, 1930; Home (Pol) File 693/1930,Home (Pol) Dept., W.Bengal, Secretariat.
68 Note by S.N.Roy,Addl.Secy.,Home(Pol)File 605/1934, Sl. 1-3, W.B.S.A.
69 Home (Pol) File 243/1930,Part I, W.B.S.A.
70 Ganesh Ghosh : Biplabi Surjya Sen, p. 35.

Here some examples of Muslim sympathy and support for the Chittagong revolutionaries are cited. Almost all of them who are alive testified to the fact that many a member of the Muslim middle class and especially the poor Muslim peasants helped the absconders with food and shelter after raid. Even Muslim women did not hesitate to give them shelter in their zenana. Subodh Roy still recalls how, after the Jalalabad fighting, he was warmly received by an old Muslim peasant as "Amader chelle' (our boy). How can he forget the help given to him by his comrade-in-arms, Abdus Sattar of Kaipara (P.S. Rouzang) ? The deep sympathy of the Muslim peasants did not die out. During the peasants' movement in the 40s, Subodh Roy witnessed the same warmth of feeling among the Muslim peasants for these revolutionaries, then turned into peasant organisers.[71]

Ranadhir Das Gupta, another participant of the raid said that the Muslims helped them both as covers and as couriers. During the days of the Special Tribunals, they, like their Hindu counterparts, freely donated to the legal defence fund.[72] This was corroborated by Kali Kinkar De of Chittagong. He told the author how his revolutionary associates Mir Ahammad of Boalkhali,

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71 Subodh Roy : interview with the author, Calcutta, December, 1982.

72 Ranadhir Das Gupta : interview with the author, Calcutta, May, 1981.

Congress leader Asrafuddin, Nawab Ali and Abdul Haq Dovasi of Chittagong town stood by them against all odds. Mir Ahammad once gave shelter to Surjya Sen; Nawab Ali was an intimate member of the Chittagong party for which, as a school boy,he had to suffer torture at the hands of the notorious officer, Shooter.[73] De gratefully recalled the two following incidents:

a) After the Jalalabad encounter, when nobody was sure who had died and who had survived,one old Muslim peasant of his village,on seeing him alive,rushed to him, embraced him with tears rolling down his checks and cried out "Hail to Allah! you are safe"[74].

b) Rahim Bux, a coachman of Chittagong town, used to carry explosives from one dump to another. During the trial,when he was put on the dock as a witness and was closely cross-examined, he declined to divulge anything or identify any one.[75]

Instead of lengthening this list,it is perhaps more pertinent to ask why, unlike the other Bengal districts, the Muslims of Chittagong offered such assistance to the revolutionaries on so many occasions. Ganesh Ghosh, Ranadhir Das Gupta, Subodh Roy and other participants of the Chittagong Armoury Raid have tried to answer this question in the following manner.

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73 Kali Kinkar De : interview with the author,Dum Dum, August, 1981.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.

Chittagong, according to them, was largely free from the communal virus and relations between the two major communities were more cordial than elsewhere. There was no communal riot in Chittagong during this period except the one which was deliberately engineered by the authorities soon after the murder of the notorious police officer Asanulla. As the meeting-ground of different races, languages, religions and cultures and as the immediate hinterland of a busy port, Chittagong and its people lived and felt somewhat differently. The crews of the merchant fleet were drawn mostly from the local Muslims who, in pursuit of their trade, came in frequent contact with the wide world. This broadened their outlook and widened their range of sympathy far beyond the narrow confines of sectarian loyalties. They could, therefore feel, almost spontaneously, a sense of oneness with those who fought and died for India's freedom.[76]

Again, why did the Buddhists lend their support to the revolutionaries ? According to Subodh Roy, the Buddhists of Chittagong were so few in number and were so like the Hindus in observance of customs, ceremonies and rituals that they considered themselves as part and parcel of the larger Hindu community. Since no social or religious barrier divided them,

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76 Author's interview with Ganesh Ghosh, Ranadhir Das Das Gupta and Subodh Roy.

what agitated the Hindus agitated the Buddhists as well. Linked by a common fate, many a young patriotic Buddhist fraternised with the revolutionaries. Perhaps the current militant anti-British struggle of the Burmese Buddhists right across the frontiers also spurred them on. Among the Buddhists Dhiren Barua took part in the armoury raid, Mahesh Barua actively helped the raiders and perished on the gallows.[77]

A section of the Indian sepoys, however small in number, cherished secret sympathy for the revolutionaries. On 21 April 1930, Amarendra Nandi, a young volunteer was sent to town to get some information, but being encircled by 200 policemen, he hid himself under a culvert. By the time they spotted him, Amarendra was already dead, having committed suicide. The British officer furiously kicked the dead boy. At this, an Indian jamadar protested : "We have come here to fight, not to insult a dead man. Don't do it again".[78]

Another incident of this type was narrated by Kalpana Datta : " I was taken to a Subedar who slapped me. At once some soldiers cordoning the house rushed there and warned the Subedar: 'you touch her again and we shall refuse to obey you'. What an experience in that grim hour ! I felt like crying in joy.

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77 Subodh Roy : interview with the author.
78 Ganesh Ghosh : interview with the author.

Our message had touched even the hearts of the army"[79]

But it must be conceded that in spite of the wide popular sympathy they enjoyed, the revolutionaries utterly lacked any organised mass base, far less any liberated areas. As the cordon of repression tightened, they had no rear to fall back upon, no space for manoeuvre and this sealed their fate. This was the great limitation, from which not only they, but also all parties and groups of Bengal revolutionaries, suffered. Surjya Sen must have been conscious of this limitation. Perhaps because of this he used to admire the great Sayasan Rebellion of Burma where in 1930 thousands of peasants rose in arms against their exploiters.[80]

IV

The Chittagong raid had a galvanising effect on revolutionaries all over the province.[81] Some of them could not even believe that such a daring exploit had been undertaken by the Bengali youth. But as the details became known, there was a change in the outlook of the Bengal revolutionaries. The younger members of

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79 Kalpana Datta : 'Chittagong's Role in Freedom Struggle'; New Age, New Delhi, 20 April 1980.
80 Kalikinkar De : interview with the author.
81 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl. 53, p.4, W.B.S.A.

all parties who were already fired with the idea of giving the British a decisive blow "clamoured for a chance to emulate the Chittagong terrorists"[82]. The message of the Chittagong heroes reached even the farthest corners, stirred up womenfolk and young girls "who from this time onwards are found assisting the terrorists as house-keepers, messengers, custodians of arms and sometimes as comrades"[83]. Within a month of the raid, the Jugantar in Calcutta under Bhupen Datta drew up a plan for major acts of revolutionary violence.The plans, according to a government document, were as follows : (a) murder of Europeans in hotels, clubs and cinemas, simultanecusly in Calcutta and in the districts by bombs; (b) burning down of the Dum Dum aerodrome with petrol; (c) disruption of gas and electric supply of Calcutta,by blowing up the gas works and electric power stations; (d) cutting off the petrol supply of Calcutta by burning down the depot of the Burma Oil Company at Budge Budge; (e) disorganisation of tramway service in Calcutta by cutting wires; (f) destruction of telegraphic communication between Calcutta and the districts of Bengal; and (g) blowing up of bridges and railway lines by dynamites and hand granades.[84]

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82 Memorandum on the history of terrorism in Bengal, 1905-1933, pp. 15 - 16.

83 Terrorism in India, 1917-1936, p. 34.

84 Ibid., pp. 35 - 36.

Only the first item of the above programme could be taken up. The Jugantar struck the first blow on 25 August 1930. Anuja Sen and Dinesh Majumder attacked Tegart with bombs at Dalhousie Square. The bombs missed the target but one bomb which exploded near the "assilant" hurt Anuja seriously and he died due to haemorrhage.[85] Two more bomb attacks took place in Calcutta on 26 and 27 August.

The government acted promptly. 18 persons were arrested, including Dr. Narayan Roy, Commissioner, Calcutta Corporation. All were put on trial in the Dalhousie Square Bomb Case.[86]

The Madaripur group, a faction of the Jugantar, committed a dacoity at Tala, Calcutta in April 1930. Members of Dacca Sri Sangha shot at Lowman, I.G. Police and Hudson, S.P. on 25 August 1930. Bullets hit the spine of Lowman, who died immediately, and Hudson was shot in right buttock and the bullet wounded his rectum.[87]

One week after this incident, the B.V. struck. On 8 December 1930, Benoy Bose, Badal Gupta and Dinesh Gupta entered the Writers' Buildings, shot at Col. Simpson, I.G.Prison and wounded

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85 Home (Pol) File 674/1930. Home (Pol) Dept.,W.Bengal Secretariat.
86 Ibid.
87 Home (Pol) 683/1930. Home Dept.,W.Bengal Secretariat. See also Appendix E for arms distributed by the Jugantar group for their proposed rising.

a few officials. Next year, two girls, Santi Das and Suniti Chaudhuri of Sri Sangha, murdered Stevens, the District Magistrate of Comilla. Then followed the murders of three successive magistrates in Midnapore - Peddie in 1931, Douglas in 1932 and Burge in 1933 and finally, an attempt on the life of Anderson, Governor of Bengal, at the Lebong Race course in Darjeeling in May 1934.

The Chittagong raid had also inspired the young militants of the Anushilan who demanded immediate action. But the prompt action of the government against the leaders, leading to the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case in 1933, dealt a hard blow from which it could not fully recover.

The Chittagong uprising, in several respects, marked not only the peak of revolutionary activities in Bengal, but also a point of departure. Not so much the killing of individual enemies, but the symbolic destruction of British power in a small part of India, even if for a short time, was the main object of the Chittagong uprising. This is clear from the Proclamation of the Indian Republican Army. Secondly, after the heroic battle of Jalalabad, Surjya Sen planned to retreat into the villages for organising guerilla sorties against the British administration throughout Chittagong. This revealed a new and higher level of revolutionary consciousness. It has been stressed by some of the closest comrades of Surjya Sen that by 1931 he was leaning towards

mass revolutionary activities, as is indicated by his appreciative reference to the Burmese revolutionary Saya Sen[88]. All these tend to invest the Chittagong uprising with a degree of uniqueness which is unprecedented in the annals of the revolutionary movement in India.

Before concluding this section, a few brief words of comparison between Bagha Jatin (1880-1915) and Masterda may not be out of order. Both stubbornly believed in and staunchly followed the path of armed struggle against British rule in India. Both made supreme sacrifices for the cause they upheld. Bagha Jatin grew into a legend after his martyrdom (September 1915), while Masterda became a legend during his lifetime. These apparent similarities notwithstanding, there was a vast difference in their outlook and practice.

Bagha Jatin's basic plan of armed struggle was grounded on the hope of securing arms from abroad, from Kaiser's Germany in particular. He hoped to overthrow the British imperialist power with armed assistance from its rival which, however, was no less imperialistic.

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88 Kalikinkar De : interview with the author.

But Masterda thought and planned differently. He insisted on self-help. He did not depend on arms aid from abroad, from questionable sources overseas. He looked within, not without, for the necessary supply of arms with which to equip his revolutionary contingents. Masterda firmly believed that there should not be any dearth of arms if only the revolutionaries were determined and organised enough to secure them. The enemy could be and must be fought with arms seized from its own arsenals. In fact, the revolutionaries must look upon the enemy's armoury as their principal source of arms supply. That this was no idle hope but an eminently feasible plan was proved to the hilt by the exploit that has justly immortalised him and his comrades.

As a technique of struggle, the Balasore episode was an unmitigated disaster. Masterda's master plan also failed. But it was a heroic failure and on a much higher plane. The successful armoury raid failed because it was not followed up by any armed struggle of the masses. Despite this basic limitation, the raid succeeded in vindicating the great revolutionary principle : a people determined to wage an armed struggle against their oppressors do not lack arms.

Chapter VI

OFFICIAL TERRORISM VERSUS REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY

MIDNAPORE 1930 - 1934

I

On 12 March 1930, Gandhiji began his Dandi march as a prelude to the Civil Disobedience movement. The matter took a serious turn in Midnapore where volunteers decided to start defying the salt laws. In many places in Midnapore, district committees were formed and "volunteers enrolled and definite plans were made to start the movement"[1]. The government declared the agitation unlawful and enforced Section 144. In July the people in Midnapore started a new campaign of non-payment of chowkidari tax.

The situation was so tense that the authorities tried to tackle it by all kinds of repressive measures. All sorts of sadistic repression were let loose on the district, viz., slapping, lathi charge, caning of volunteers, kicking, pushing of lathis into the rectum, pouring in of urine and excreta in the mouths of volunteers. Even the women volunteers were not spared. One can cite dozens of examples where women were stripped naked and caned till they bled profusely.[2] As the movement gathered a national dimension the repressive measures of the government headed by Peddie, the District Magistrate,"reached a new crescendo of brutuality"[3].

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1 Report on the Administration of Bengal,1929-30,Calcutta,1931 p. ix.
2 Narendra Nath Das : History of Midnapore,Part II,1st ed. Calcutta, 1962, p. 136.
3 Binoy Jiban Ghosh : Murder of British Magistrate, Calcutta, 1962, p. 22.

A brutal incident occurred in Chechua Hat, under police station Daspur. On 3 June 1930, the brutal caning on Congress workers by the Officer-in-charge of the police station infuriated the people who in retaliation killed the officer-in-charge and his assistant on the spot. Peddie immediately "sent out 50 men of Assam Frontier Rifles and 70 of Eastern Rifles to bring the situation under control."[4]

When the news of government repression in Midnapore reached Calcutta, a non-official inquiry committee was formed under the chairmanship of J.N. Bose, M.L.C., but the report was proscribed as soon as it was published. K.C. Neogi, a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, read it out on the floor of the Assembly :

"It is nothing but the spirit of General Dyer or the spirit of Jallianwalla Bag, that is stalking the land to-day".[5]

The report further says that in some cases the assault was directed not only to hurt the persons physically but also to humiliate them in the eyes of others. Some men were made to hold their ears and to stand up and sit down several times. Some men were also made to rub their nose on the ground.These incidents brought back the memories of Amritsar under General Dyer[6].

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4 The Report on the Administration of Bengal,1929-30, Calcutta, p. xi.

5 Indian Legislative Assembly : Proceedings, 12 July, 1930 : Quoted in The Indian Annual Register, July - December, Vol.II, 1930, p. 165.

6 J. N. Bose's Report Quoted in Narendra Nath Das's book, op. cit., p. 146.

Supporting and justifying the terror, W.D.R. Prentice Home Member, said in the council that the District Magistrate had been doing "wonderful work" whereas according to the non-official enquiry report, he was "guilty of disgraceful conduct"[7].

Meanwhile, several revolutionary groups had been formed in the Midnapore town. There were three groups working separately under Dinesh Gupta (B.V. group), Sachin Maity (local Jugantar) and Kshirode Datta (Anushilan). The credit for the formation of the B.V. nucleus went to Dinesh Gupta who came to Midnapore in December 1929, on the occasion of a youth conference, presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose. Dinesh Gupta, a "notorious revolutionary" who came from Dacca, used to hold parades of volunteers. It was he who infused revolutionary ideas into the youth and inspired them to prepare themselves to die for the country.[8] He recruited Prafulla Tripathi, Parimal Roy, Amar Chatterjee, Naren Das, Phani Kundu, Brajo Kishore Chakraborty and others. When Dinesh Gupta left for Dacca (1929), Parimal Roy and Phani Kundu were placed in charge of the nascent group. This group was said to have connection with the detenu Bhupen Rakshit Roy's group and the Benu Office in Calcutta.[9]

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7 Ibid., p. 148.
8 Bimal Das Gupta : interview with the author : Midnapore, March 1978. Also statement of Phani Kundu, recorded by the I.B., dated 22 April 1932; D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1931 on assassination of J.Peddie, Part II.
9 A note on Midnapore outrage by Dy.Superintendent of Police, Midnapore, dt. 28 April 1931; Ibid., Part I.

Sachin Maity, a local congress leader, was at the same time a leader of the Jugantar group of Midnapore. He, with all his cadres, participated energetically in the Civil Disobedience movement and used it as a camouflage to recruit militant young boys to the party. No plan in Midnapore was hatched without his knowledge.[10]

Kshirode Datta of Barisal was sent to form an Anushilan unit in Midnapore. He was able to recruit a few students to his group[11]. In an interview with the author, he claimed that he was never in favour of immediate violence and individual terrorism and that he trained the cadres with a view to organising a general uprising at an opportune moment[12].

The rank and file of the B.V., however, grew restive and wanted to do something "when they saw that mothers and sisters were ravaged"[13] by the repressive officers. They decided to create fear in the minds of the perpetrators of the crimes so that they might think twice before assaulting the people.[14] During this time (1931) three incidents added fuel to the fire, viz., the death sentences passed on Dinesh Gupta for the Writers' Buildings Shooting Case, on Kamakrishna Biswas of Chittagong and the

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10 Kshirode Datta : interview with the author, Calcutta, March 1978.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Narendra Nath Das : op.cit., p. 172.
14 Ibid., pp. 172 - 173.

sentence of execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukdeb in the Lahore Jail. These agitated young minds and the B.V. of Midnapore decided to strike.

A conspiracy was hatched in a secret meeting in February 1931, in which it was decided to kill Peddie, District Magistrate, F.W.Kidd, Superintendent of Police, Sankar Sen, S.D.O., Samshud Doha, S.D.P.O., Contai, Abdul Guffar S.D.O., Contai and all other Midnapore officers, who were said to have become notorious in suppressing the Civil Disobedience movement. This secret meeting was attended by some confirmed revolutionaries, most of whom were working as volunteers in the interior of the district.[15]

In January 1931, Phani Kundu and Phani Das were deputed to kill Sankar Sen and Samshud Doha. But the attempt failed as they could not reach their targets.[16] The next target was Peddie for two reasons : one was that he had committed excesses during the Civil Disobedience movement and the other was that Dinesh Gupta was to be hanged. It was considered necessary to murder Peddie in order to uphold the revolutionary heroism and martyrdom of Dinesh Gupta.[17] An I.B.report said that the three revolutionary groups - the Anushilan, the Jugantar and the B.V.-joined hands and agreed to work together in effecting the assassination

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15 Statement of Parimal Roy, recorded in Midnapore Jail dt. 30 April 1930; D.I.G., I.B.Bengal File 1931 on The assassination of J.Peddie, D.M.Midnapore Part III.

16 Narendra Nath Das : op.cit., p. 173.

17 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1931 on the assassination of J. Peddie, Part III.

of Peddie. Two revolvers were brought by Kshirode Datta from outside Midnapore. Both he and Sachin Maity tried to bring an 'East Bengal man' to commit the murder. It was also reported that they approached the Jugantar leaders of Calcutta to help them to execute this plan[18].

In March, on getting an information that Peddie was returning from Panskura, Ram Krishna Roy of the B.V. was sent to Kharagpur station to murder Peddie; but he failed in his mission as Peddie was heavily guarded. Another attempt was made at the Midnapore station, but again he failed. The party then directed its members from the Midnapore collegiate school to urge upon the headmaster to hold an exhibition. It was arranged. The District Magistrate was invited to inaugurate it on 1 April 1931. Jyoti Jiban Ghosh and Bimal Das Gupta, both belonging to the B.V. were deputed to make an attempt on Peddie's life. But they were disappointed as Peddie did not turn up. The exhibition was due to be over on the 6th. But at the request of the students (who were mostly party members), the headmaster extended the exhibition and this time the plan worked. In the evening of 9th April, Peddie came to pay his visit. As he stooped to examine the exhibits, he was fatally shot by Bimal Das Gupta.[19]

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18 Ibid., Part III.
19 Narendra Nath Das : op. cit., pp. 173 - 174.

Five shots were fired at Peddie apparently from two revolvers of .380 and .450 bore. All the five shots went home striking the District Magistrate, three in the back and two in the left arm.[20]

In the great panic that ensued both Bimal Das Gupta and Jyoti Jiban Ghosh escaped. They snatched a cycle from a passerby, Phanindra Nath Mukherjee, cycled to Salbani and then proceeded to Calcutta via Gomoh.[21]

The murder of Peddie earned both applause and opprobrium. The news of the assassination sent a thrill among the youth. It was considered a great feat of the revolutionary movement after the Chittagong raid. I.B. reported that young men gathered at the place of occurrence and commenced shouting "Bandemataram, Gandhi Maharajki joy".[22] The pleaders of the Midnapore Bar and the Judicial officers met in the District Judge's Court where the president of the Bar openly condemned this "dastardly and cowardly" outrage on Peddie.[23] J.M.Sen Gupta issued a statement condemning the murder and declared that those who indulged in violence were weakening his hand in his effort to get the

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20 D.I.G.,I.B.Bengal File 1931 on the assassination of J. Peddie, Part I.

21 Kshirode Datta : interview with the author.

22 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1931 on the assassination of J. Peddie, Part II.

24 Ananda Bazar Patrika, 9 April, 1931.

political prisoners released.[24] The murder was widely deplored even by the Indian newspapers.[25] .Although resolutions were passed at meetings of teachers and municipal councillors condemning the outrage, yet the authority smelt a rat. A government secret report said that there appeared to be an under-current of feeling of sympathy with the outrage.[26]

On the same night immediately after the occurrence, several houses were searched in Midnapore and arrests were made. Police arrested Kshirode Datta, Prafulla Tripathi and Bibekananda Bose from the town on suspicion. In course of investigation, police arrested 14 persons including Parimal Roy, Phani Kundu, Amar Chatterjee, Brajo Kishore Chakraborty, Jyoti Jiban Ghosh and Sachin Maity under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act.[27] Manmatha Nath Das, a pleader and a local congress leader, moved bail on behalf of Bibekananda Bose, Nirmal Adhikary, Amar Chatterjee, Brajo Kishore Chakraborty and Prafulla Tripathi of whom all except Prafulla were released on bail. I.B. reported that Congress people are "all combined to get the accused persons released on bail" and the local "bar in a body has taken up the cause of the accused free of cost"[28].

The police tried their utmost but could not get any information about the actual assailant. It was suspected that the

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24 Fortnightly Reports on the Political situation in Bengal January - June 1931, B.G. Press, 1932, p. 27.

25 Report on the Newspapers and periodicals in Bengal, January - June 1931, p. 535.

26 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1931 on the assassination of J. Peddie, Part II.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

Chittagong absconders had committed this outrage. But when it was found that the revolver used in this case was of the same bore as had been used in the Writers' Buildings Case, the police were inclined to believe that Dacca Jugantar absconders were responsible for this outrage.[29] However, on cross examination, Parimal Roy confessed that the outrage was organised by a revolutionary group of Midnapore. He admitted to be in the know of the conspiracy but refused to divulge the names of the actual assailants.[30] The missing link was, however, supplied by one Sushil Das, an eye witness of the occurrence. He stated that he had found Bimal Das Gupta shooting Peddie; the second man might be Jyoti Jiban Ghosh.[31]

Jyoti Jiban Ghosh was arrested on 24 April 1931, but Bimal Das Gupta could not be traced in spite of the announcement of a reward of Rs.5,000/-.[32] There was no further development till 29 October 1931, when Bimal Das Gupta was found shooting Villiers, President of the European Association, at the latter's office in Calcutta. Villiers slid under the table and saved his life. Bimal Das Gupta was caught on the spot and sent up for trial. He was sentenced to ten years' transportation.[33] He was also placed

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29 Ibid., Part I.
30 Ibid., Part II.
31 Ibid., Part I.
32 Ibid.
33 Binoy Jiban Ghosh : op. cit., p. 36.

before a Special Tribunal for the murder of Peddie, but as the eye-witnesses of the case were won over by the revolutionaries, Sir N.N. Sarkar, Advocate General, withdrew the case and the accused was discharged[34] to the great disgust of The Statesman and/the Englishman[35].

The morale of the British officials was shaken by the murder of three I.C.S. men in a single year : Peddie in April 1931, A.L. Garlick, District and Session Judge, Alipore, in July 1931 and C.G.B. Stevens, District Magistrate, Comilla, in December 1931. Their attitude was reflected in an administrative note :

"Briefly, the position is that three officers have been killed and three have retired; there are only 14 British District Officers and 6 British District Judges, and there are practically no reserves from which their numbers can be maintained if there are further casualties ... the feeling is growing, especially among senior officers and those with families, that it is not worthwhile staying on in Bengal under present conditions."[36]

The same note added that if the government wished the British officers to carry on the show of administration "terrorism" must be contained.[37]

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34 Ibid., p. 37
35 Fortnightly Reports on the Political situation in Bengal, July - December, 1931, B.G.Press, 1932, p.36.
36 Measures to deal with Terrorism; a note by W.S. Hopkyns, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Bengal, 15 January, 1932, Calcutta, 1931-32, p.2.
37 Ibid.

II

Robert Douglas succeeded Peddie as the District Magistrate of Midnapore. During his tenure of office, the second phase of the Civil Disobedience movement was resumed. The government took stern measures to suppress it. After the murder of Peddie punitive taxes were imposed in the town. Pathan armed guards were posted at all important points and strict vigilance was kept on the houses of suspects and on the movements of young men.[38] Torture and molestation was the order of the day. All kinds of repressive legislations viz., Ordinance Nos. II to V were enforced throughout the district.[39]

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38 Binoy Jiban Ghosh : op.cit., p. 38.

39 Narendra Nath Das : op.cit., p.183.

Ordinance II, called the Emergency Power Ordinance (4 January 1932), conferred special powers upon magistrates including powers to restrict movement of vehicles, issuing of search warrants, detention without trial. It also re-constituted the Courts of Criminal jurisdiction for summary trials.

Ordinance III, called the Unlawful Instigation Ordinance (4 January 1932), conferred upon the authorities the power to prosecute or imprison any person who refused to, or instigated any one directly or indirectly not to pay taxes or payment of certain liabilities.

Ordinance IV, called the Unlawful Association Ordinance (4th January 1932), was used against associations considered dangerous to public peace. Any person who entered or remained upon a notified area without permission should be deemed to commit criminal offence.

Ordinance V, called the Prevention of Molestation and Boycotting Ordinance (4 January 1932), empowered the authorities to punish with imprisonment upto six months or fine or with both any person who molested or abated the boycotting of public servants.

The young rebels became restless and planned for retaliation. In an anonymous letter addressed to the new magistrate of Midnapore the lives of Douglas and other higher officials were threatened :

"The matter will go worse, the more the government carries on its repressive measures. Besides we warn the new magistrate of Midnapore and the police officials of all the districts that if they go on with the oppression, then they will be removed from this world; i.e., they will have the same fate like Lowman, Simpson, James Peddie, Hudson and Saunders of Lahore"[40].

The agitation reached its height after the shooting on unarmed detenus in the Hijli Detention Camp[41] on 16 September 1931 resulting in deaths of two detenus. What led to this gruesome incident? According to the government version, a train of events preceded this incident. On the night of 28 July following the murder of Garlick, the detenus celebrated the occasion by illuminating the main tower of the camp. On being questioned, some of them stated that it was done to celebrate the acquittal of some of their friends in the Dalhousie Square Bomb Case. Whatever might have been the reasons, as a result of this incident, the monthly allowances of the detenus were reduced from Rs. 32 to 25 as a disciplinary measure.[42]

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40 Post Card posted from Jaipur, Rajasthan, dt.24 April 1931; D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1931 on the assassination of J. Peddie, Part III.

41 The author has presented a paper on this entitled "Hijli Shooting episode - case study", in a seminar organised by the State Archives, West Bengal on 15 April 1981.

42 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 17 October 1931.

Shortly after this order, there occurred a series of outbreaks of fire in the subsidiary buildings at night resulting in partial destruction of cells. To stop all these, four sentries were posted as a precautionary measure and the stairway to the tower was blocked. But the detenus managed to break into the tower and illuminated it after the news of the death of Asanulla, S.I. of Police, Chittagong was received.[43] All these incidents infuriated the jail authorities.

Soon another incident took place which increased the bitterness. It was alleged that on 15 September when the detenu Dinesh Sen was being transferred to the Buxa Detention Camp, a large number of detenus assembled at the main gate to see him off and tried to enter the inner gate forcibly. They were resisted and pushed back by the sentries with lathis. This led to a minor scuffle.The news reached inside and a number of sepoys, armed with lathis rushed to the spot. But due to the timely arrival of Baker, the Camp Commandant, the matter did not go out of control; both the parties were persuaded to disperse. But ill-feeling,far from being abated, began to grow and this must have led to the incident on the night of 16 September.[44]

On the night of 16 September at about 9-30 p.m. the alarm bell started ringing and the sentries under Havildar Rahaman Khan

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43 Report from Mr.Douglas,D.M.Midnapore,28 September 1931; Home(Pol) File KW 765/1931, W.B.S.A.

44 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 17 October 1931.

opened indiscriminate firing on the main building. This led to the death of Santosh Mitra and Tarakeswar Sen Gupta.The police fired even on the cowshed where the detenus had taken shelter, at the hospital where ailing detenus were put up, and even into the dining hall, where some of the detenus were taking their meals.[45] Sepoys from eight boxes and those on patrol duties opened fire simultaneously.[46] It was also reported that sentries and sepoys armed with muskets and bayonets went upstairs and attacked right and left,causing injury to some 20 detenus; in some cases injuries were of serious nature necessitating in one case - the case of Govindapada Datta - amputation of the left arm.[47] The whole incident was over in ten minutes,but its impact was immense. Baker, having a telephone call, rushed to the camp and arranged for medical help, including shifting of the wounded to the hospital. Douglas organised an inquiry into the affair, but the detenus declined to appear before the magisterial inquiry.[48]

The detenus were naturally agitated and immediately after the incident,they sent a letter to the Governor describing the incident as "entirely unprovoked,unwarranted,premediated and pre-arranged"[49] and demanded a non-official inquiry. The

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45 Shib Sankar Mitra : interview with the author,Calcutta, October, 1980.
46 Narendra Nath Das : op.cit., p.179
47 Hijli Enquiry Report. Calcutta, 1931-32, p.2.
48 Home (Pol) File Kw 765/1931, W.B.S.A.
49 Letters from the detenus to the Governor (no mention of date, 1931); Ibid.

authorities took great care to see to it that the news of this firing did not come out. In spite of all their precautions, the news was leaked by the mother of Srimanta Bhattacharya, a detenu in the Hijli Camp. She rushed to the office of The Ananda Bazar Patrika and passed on the report to Suresh Majumder, the editor of that paper. In this way the report reached the public.[50]

As the news spread, detenus in other jails and camps went on hunger strike, demanding redress of the Hijli atrocity.[51] Struck dumb by the ferocity of the incident, Subhas Chandra Bose, J.M.Sen Gupta, Prof. Nripen Banerjee and Satin Sen rushed to Hijli. Subhas Chandra Bose was denied access to the detenus; however, the dead bodies were handed over tohim.[52]

The news of the firing roused indignation throughout Bengal. The nationalist press, according to a government report, "concentrated mainly on Hijli affairs" and "utilised the opportunity thus offered to villify the Government and its officers to the utmost."[53] On 19 September, the Ananda Bazar Patrika, the Nayak and the Amrita Bazar Patrika sharply criticised these atrocities in the Hijli Detention Camp.[54] Students of most of the colleges of Calcutta went on spontaneous strike; the

50 Prafulla Kumar Gupta : interview with the author, Calcutta, October, 1981.
51 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1 October 1931.
52 Ibid., 19 September 1931.
53 Fortnightly Report on the Political Situation in Bengal, January-June, 1931, p. 25.
54 Report of Newspapers and Periodicals in Bengal, July-December, 1931, pp. 1186, 1189 & 1192.

exceptions were St. Xaviers and Presidency Colleges.[55] The Calcutta Corporation by 42 to five votes passed a resolution calling for an impartial inquiry and expressed its view that there was absolutely no justification for the "mad orgy of violence."[56] The B.P.C.C. organised a huge meeting on 26 September 1931. Originally the venue of the meeting was the Town Hall, but as more than one lakh people had assembled, the venue was shifted to the Maidan. Tagore, who was then in Calcutta, was so shocked that in spite of ill-health he agreed to preside over that meeting.[57] He said :

" ... An outrage that is both tragic and cowardly in its brutality, as the shooting at Hijli proclaims itself to be, should engage our attention solely for the sake of tortured humanity. When I find how almost contemptuously such an act of terrorism may be perpetrated in utter disregard of public opinion, I feel sure that it is but one more of the deterioration that has enfeebled the moral character of the British rule in India. Our people may not have the physical capacity to resist injustice, but no power can obstruct them from passing moral judgement; and on their judgement

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55 The Statesman, 19 September 1931.
56 Ibid., 29 September 1931.
57 Nepal Majumder : Rabindra Nath O Subhas Chandra, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1375 B.S., p. 43.

every Government, however, utterly alien it be, depends for its very existence."[58]

The Congress Working Committee also condemned the Hijli shooting and the Chittagong outrages as they had "demonstrated the incompetence and inhumanity of the Government officials" and demanded punishment of the evil-doers and compensation for the victims.[59]

Contrary to the usual official practice, the government of Bengal appointed a judicial inquiry committee. Both the parties - the sepoys and the detenus gave different versions before the committee. According to the version of the sepoys, some detenus made a deliberate attack on Chandra Singh, Sentry No.3, when he fired in the air and called for help. Two other sentries, Chandrikalal and Washib Singh rushed to his help and fired shots. The detenus then tried to snatch away the bayonet of Sirajul Hussain, sentry No.7, who also fired to frighten the assailants. Some of the detenus attacked Sentry No.8. In the meantime when the news of this "fusillade" reached the sepoys, they assembled near the two gates and when by order of Havildar Rahaman Khan the inner gate was opened, the sepoys rushed inside. It was said that they were halted by Rahaman Khan near a culvert, 85 yards away from the main building. Suddenly when the detenus, armed with mosquito-net poles and brickbats, started throwing missilies on the sepoys, they

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58 The Indian Annual Register, July-December, Vol.II; Calcutta, 1931, pp. 17 - 18.

59 Ibid., p. 24.

opened fire. Their intention was not to "kill" but only to "frighten" away the detenus.[60]

The version of the detenus was that none of them interfered with the works of the sepoys. There was an alarm given and the sepoys rushed in through the inner gate shouting "Hukum mil gia, Sala log ko maro". They came up the road leading from the gate to the main building and, from a distance of about 20 yards from the south-east corner, began firing. Some of them entered the building, went upstairs and charged the detenus with bayonets.[61]

The Inquiry Committee analysing the depositions dismissed the charges made by the detenus that the whole thing was prearranged. According to it, the primary responsibility for the incident rested partly with those detenus whose misbehaviour had caused irritation among the sepoys, particularly with those who interfered with the sentries on the night of 16 September. The Committee however held that in spite of provocations from the detenus, the firing was unjustified.[62] It also exonerated the authority of any complicity in the shooting affray.[63]

Shib Shankar Mitra, an witness of the incident told the author that whatever might have been the findings of the Committee,

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60 Hijli Enquiry Report, pp. 2 - 3.
61 Ibid., p. 3.
62 Ibid., p. 8.
63 Ibid., p. 7.

the shooting was pre-arranged; at about 8 p.m. on that night, the detenus were forewarned by the sepoy on patrol duty requesting them "Babu go inside the cell, something serious is going to happen". Mitra said that there might have been a hot exchange of words with the sepoys at the time of Dinesh's departure, but certainly this could not have led to such a serious thing - some evil genius must have been behind it.[64] Evidence tends to suggest that the dastardly attack on the detenus was pre-meditated and pre-arranged at least at the lowest level - at the level of sepoys and havildars. Whether this was done with the knowledge and/or the connivance of higher authorities, it is difficult to say. Assuming that the attack had been masterminded at a higher level, it had surely backfired; there was widespread public sympathy not for the perpetrators of the crime but for its victims.

The Hijli firing sealed the fate of Douglas. The B.V. decided to strike and its target was the magistrate himself. At about 5-45 p.m. on 30 April 1932 Douglas, while he was presiding over the meeting of the District Board, was shot by two young men, Pradyot Bhattacharya and Pravangshu Pal. Three or four shots were fired in quick succession. Douglas was found bleeding all over

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64 Shib Sankar Mitra : interview with the author.

his body. He was immediately taken to hospital where he died on the same night.[65]

His assailants were pursued and one of them, Pradyot Bhattacharya, was caught in a nearby jungle by J. George, S.D.O. Tamluk and his armed guard Basir Ali after a chase. He was searched and from his person were recovered,among other things, a loaded six-chambered.450 bore revolver. From his right pocket a piece of paper was found with the following written in red ink : "mild protest against oppression at Hijli. Let these deaths be proclaimed to the frightened Briton. Let India wake up by our sacrifice."[66] According to the police, "it showed that the accused was bent on wrecking vengence on the Executive head of the district by way of retaliation for the shooting incident in the Hijli Detention Camp".[67]

The other assailant, Pravangshu Pal,ran towards the north-east and while running,he fired at his pursuers and reached home safely after a detour.Next day he was sent to Calcutta.[68]

The mood of the people of Midnapore at the murder of Douglas can best be ascertained from a governmental report.According to it,for some three weeks no public meeting could be convened to mourn the death of Douglas.When,however,the meeting was called,

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65 A note of Douglas Murder : Emperior vs.Pradyot Kumar Bhattacharya, High Court Death reference No.12 and Criminal Appeal No.597 of 1932. This note was prepared by State Committee for compilation of History of Freedom Movement in India,Bengal Region,I.H.C.A.

66 D.I.G.,I.B.Bengal File 1932 on Douglas Murder Case, Part II.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

it was practically the government officials only who attended. The general public was conspicuous by its absence.[69]

The police ran amuck after the murder. A reward of 5,000 rupees was declared for giving any information leading to the arrest of the person who along with Pradyot Bhattacharya murdered the Magistrate. A reward of Rs.500 was also declared for information relating to the whereabouts of Supati Roy who, according to the police, was the man behind the assassination.[70] Many houses were searched in the town and the police arrested 22 persons in a single sweep. Provangshu Pal was arrested in Calcutta and brought to Midnapore. But as nobody could identify him, he was let off.[71] In the police lock-up, inhuman torture was made on the persons arrested. Third degree method was applied on Phani Das, Naren Das and Pradyot Bhattacharya to extract confession. They were kicked and beaten with canes and most inhuman things were perpetrated on the private parts of their bodies. Big needles were thrust in their finger nails.[72] Phani Das was subjected to indiscriminate baton charge. In terrible exhaustion Phani cried for water. Rashid Bux Choudhuri, S.I. poured urine in his mouth to quence his thirst.[73]

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69 Fortnightly Reports on the Political situation in Bengal, January-June, 1932, B.G.Press, 1932, p.49.
70 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1932 on Duglas murder Case, Part II.
71 Binoy Jiban Ghosh : op.cit., pp. 42 - 44.
72 Narendranath Das : op.cit., p. 191.
73 Ibid.

Phani Das could not stand the degree of torture and several times he fainted away. This continued for more than two days and he was on the point of collapse.[74] More or less the same fate overtook Naren Das and Pradyot Bhattacharya.

On 6 May 1932, a charge sheet was submitted against Pradyot Bhattacharya; the rest were discharged. The Special Tribunal, consisting of K.C.Nag, District and Session Judge, 24 Parganas, Jnanankur Dey, District and Session Judge, Midnapore and Bhujangadhar Mustafi, delivered its judgment on 25 June.

After an exhaustive examination of the evidences, the judges came to the conclusion that the "young man found standing to theleft of Mr. Douglas behind his chair aiming the revolver at him was the accused Prodyot...[75]. The judges also charged the police officers for perpetrating inhuman tortures on the prisoners in the lock-up and expressed their displeasure for detaining them for many days without producing them before the Magistrate for having their confessions recorded.[76]

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74 Binoy Jiban Ghosh : op.cit., p. 43.
75 A note on Douglas Murder : Emperor vs Pradyot Kumar Bhattacharya, Calcutta High Court Death References No. 12 and Criminal Appeal No.597 of 1932; op.cit.
76 Ibid.

The judges also dwelt at some length on the motive of the crime. They commented that the motive of the accused was clear from the piece of paper (Exhibit I) found in the pocket of Pradyot Bhattacharya, which was a sufficient indication of the crime. Along with this, various posters and leaflets which were distributed throughout the town would also explain the motive of the accused. Some of them were highly inflammatory in character, calling upon the students and youths to take the blood of the Britishers, e.g., 'Blood of Tyrants wanted' (Exhibit 19).[77]

The judges were not, however, unanimous regarding the verdict. J.De was in favour of giving lesser penalty considering the tender age of Pradyot Bhattacharya (he was then only 18). But Mustafi and Nag who constituted the majority of two to one, passed death sentence on Pradyot Bhattacharya.[78]

III

The murder of Douglas was followed by a period of brutal repression. John Anderson in his Darbar speech boldly asserted :

"Anarchist forces in Midnapore seem to have thrown out a challenge to us that they won't allow a British Magistrate to

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77 Trial by Special Tribunal : Proceedings; D.I.G.,I.B. Bengal File 1932 on Douglas Murder Case, Part II.

78 Ibid.

survive. The government takes up that challenge ... any further anarchist activity in Midnapore will be met by military action".[79]

John Anderson proved true to his word. An additional Garhwali regiment was quartered in the town; punitive tax of 67,000 rupees was imposed; the town was full of spies, watchers and I.B. men. Under section 5 and 22 of Ordinance No. X of 1932, D.L. Khan, Raja of Narajole, Atul Chandra Bose and Prabodh Nath - all men of eminence were forced to vacate their residences which were to be used as army quarters.[80] In other words, Midnapore under Burge, the new magistrate, looked like a "garrison town".

Because of strong police vigilance,the activities of the B.V. were not much in evidence till November, 1932. But soon in a secret meeting on the bank of the Rajar Dighi the revolutionaries decided to assassinate Burge, as he had started an engine of repression on the people of Kuai to realise Chawkidari tax. The task of assassination was assigned to Anath Panja and Mrigen Bhattacharya, both of whom were still in their teens.[81]

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79 Binoy Jiban Ghosh : op.cit., p. 48.
80 Report on the administration of Bengal,1932-33, Calcutta, 1934, pp. XXIII-XXIV; And Narendra Nath Das : op.cit., p. 195.
81 Kamakshya Ghosh : interview with the author, Midnapore, May 1976.

How to get hold of Burge ? After the murder of Douglas, the new magistrate was taking extraordinary precaution; he seldom came out of his bungalow, wherefrom he transacted all official business.[82]

Three attempts were made on Burge's life - one on 8 August on the occasion of a charity match, the second on 19 August and the third on 31st August during a football match. But all of them were unsuccessful as the revolutionaries failed to get direct access to Burge. It was, therefore, resolved that on the occasion of a friendly football match between the Town Club and the Muhamadan Sporting Club, scheduled to be held on 2 September 1933, Burge must be shot whatever might be the strength of his bodyguards. The plan was finalised. Anath Panja and Nrigen Bhattacharya would shoot; Santi Gopal Sen would stand to the west of the ground with a revolver to assist them to escape, if they ran in that direction; Nandadulal Singh would be posted at the jail gate to the east of the ground; Nirmal Jiban Ghosh would wait there fully armed; Brajokishore Chakraborty and Ram Krishna Roy would give signal for the assassination; Kamakshya Ghosh would remain near the Collectorate with a revolver; Sanatan Roy would wait on the Diamond ground and Sailesh Ghosh would wait on the college ground, each with a dagger.[83]

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82 Ibid.
83 Home (Pol) File 828/1933, W.B.S.A.

All of them took their position according to the plan and waited for Burge. As he alighted from his car, Mrigen Bhattacharya and Anath Panja rushed to him and fired, resulting in the instantenous death of Burge. The bodyguards showered bullets on the two boys. Anath Panja was killed on the spot; Mrigen Bhattacharya riddled with bullets, expired next morning.[84]

Immediately after the murder the government let loose a fresh orgy of violence. On the particular night of the murder, many houses were ransacked, and several persons were arrested. In course of carrying out the raids, the owners as well as their wards were beaten up mercilessly and the police carried on wanton destruction of all valuable materials. Womenfolk could not escape molestation. What the police and the military wanted to do in Midnapore was to terrorise the people and they were successful to a considerable extent. People in large numbers evacuated the town.[85]

In December 1933, a Special Tribunal was constituted with H.G.Waigh, T.N. Basu and S.P.Ghosh to try 13 persons. As Santi Gopal Sen absconded and Sailesh Ghosh turned approver, the trial proceeded against 11 persons. The judges commented that the murders of the three D.M.s were connected with/and committed by the same party.[86]

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84 Ibid.
85 Kamakshya Ghosh : interview with the author.
86 Home (Pol) File 828/1933, W.B.S.A.

The Tribunal delivered its judgement on 10 February 1934. Brajo Kishore Chakraborty, Ramkrishna Roy and Nirmal Jiban Ghosh were sentenced to death. Kamakshya Ghosh, Sanatan Roy, Nandadulal Singh and Sukumar Sen Gupta were sentenced to transportation for life. Bijoy Krishna Ghosh, Purananda Sanyal, Manindra Choudhuri and Saroj Ranjan Kanungo were acquitted.[87] Santi Gopal Sen was arrested in Calcutta on 7 January 1934. He was tried by Supplementary Special Tribunal. He was sentenced to transportation for life. He made appeal to the High Court on 30 August 1933, but his appeal was dismissed.[88]

The murder of Burge was generally condemned by the press in Bengal. The Advance, a nationalist paper, commented that this "will be deplored by all sections of the people"[89]. The Statesman and the Englishman, however, demanded that the perpetrators of the crime must be shot publicly without any show of trial.[90] The European Association echoed the same sentiment.[91]

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87 Binoy Jibar Ghosh : op.cit., pp. 59 - 60.
88 Before the Suppli. Sp. Tribunal at Midnapore in Notification No. 1807p dt. 10 February 1934, Home (Pol) File 828/1933, W.B.S.A.
89 Mr. Burge Murdered, B.G.Press,1933-34,p.10.
90 Narendra Nath Das : op.cit., p. 204.
91 Home (Pol) File 45/18/1933, N.A.I.

IV

The Europeans were visibly shaken by the murders which haunted them like a nightmare. An official report admits that during the last three years, district and police officers were in serious danger and resorted to unusual precaution for their safety; their wives and families passed their days "with greater anxiety". The latest tragedy at Midnapore was a clear pointer to them that no relaxation of precautions could yet be permitted.[92] In other words, Midnapore became too hot for the white men so much so that no British officer agreed to go to Midnapore.[93] At last, Griffith, a retired civilian, was persuaded to take over the charge. How shaken the morale of the bureaucracy had been, can be seen from a letter written by E.N. Blandy, Chief Secretary, Bengal, to Griffith. Blandy wrote that it was of utmost importance that he should do everything in his power to ensure the safety of the lives of officials; for the death of a single official would be an enormous score to the revolutionaries and a great setback to the work which had been accomplished by the police in the last few years.[94]

The murder of Burge was followed by a new wave of repression. Application of a number of preventive and restrictive orders under the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act, 1932 and the special rule framed thereunder unleashed this new

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92 Memorandum on the history of terrorism in Bengal, 1905 - 1933, p. 26.
93 Narendranath Das : op.cit., p. 204.
94 E.N. Blandy to Mr. Griffith, dt. 20 May 1935; Home (Pol) File 523/1935, Sl. 1-2, Home (Pol) Dept. West Bengal Secretariat.

terror. Generally speaking, the measures which had been found successful in Chittagong were applied in Midnapore -- curfew order, restrictions on the movements of young Hindus, identity card system etc.[95] Within a week following the murder, the entire town was combed out by the combined initiative of the police and the military. Every available agency was used to unearth information relating to the revolutionary organisation. Soon the authority came to the conclusion that a large number of persons in the town - some of influence and standing, professional men such as lawyers and teachers of college and schools, some government officers and many in the service of the local bodies - had either some connection with the revolutionaries or gave support to them.[96]

In October and November 1933 drastic steps were taken against men of prominence and standing. According to a government report, 29 persons were externed from the town. These included three college teachers, one Principal, some criminal lawyers of the town and the Assistant Headmaster of the Collegiate School. According to the same report, the following persons were removed from their posts: a clerk of the Midnapore Treasury, an accountant of the District

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95 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl.No.21, pp. 15-16, [illegible]. The B.S.T.O. Act, 1932 conferred upon senior officers many powers, including powers to detain any person, to commandeer any land or building to be used as offices or as quarters. The District Magistrates were authorised to issue certain restrictive orders e.g. promulgation of curfew, control of traffic etc. etc.

96 Ibid., p. 16.

Board office, head clerk of the High School, a teacher of Hindu School, an excise vendor. The head clerk of the District Judge Court was warned and seven teachers of the Collegiate School were removed on grounds partly political and partly academic.[97]

The 3rd Battalion of the 18 Gurkha Rifles was stationed in Midnapore. The army along with the police organised marches in all the subdivisions. The object of these operations were as follows :

(a) to impress strongly upon the people that all the coercive organs of the government were jointly working for a common object;

(b) to demonstrate the mobility, efficiency and discipline of the troops;

(c) to create an atmosphere unfavourable to subversive elements;

(d) to assist in obtaining information regarding anti-government activities by providing cordons for searches at a very short notice; and

(e) to facilitate the working out of particular lines of enquiry for the Intelligence Branch.[98]

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97 Ibid., p. 25.
98 Ibid., p. 17.

The troops organised ceremonial flagmarches in most affected areas.[99] Before holding parades,people were asked to attend them and salute the Union Jack; they were to erect gates, decorate their houses and supply food to the soldiers. While conducting route marches, the army frequently committed excesses. In Tamluk, Rai Saheb Sarat Chandra Mukherjee was asked to explain his failure to attend the parade on 29 November 1933. In Bally - Govindapur (P.S. Potaspur, Contai) the houses of Ashutosh Chaudhuri and Ramnath Maity, both Congress workers,were searched. They were asked by a special Magistrate to salute the Union Jack. On refusal, they were caned till they bled.Then they were taken to the soldier's camp. On the next day (10 December 1933) both of them were brought to the parade ground and their heads were forcibly struck against the ground for salutation.There were scores of such incidents to show how the army behaved at that time.[100] It was also alleged that women were raped by soldiers.[101]

The excess committed by the army raised a wave of indignation throughout Bengal. In a protest meeting held at Albert Hall, Calcutta,the speakers criticised the much-advertised civilising mission of British rule.A.K.Fazlal Haque assured his Hindu brethren of Muslim support. He also moved a point of order in the Bengal Council.[102] The Secretary of State for India in a

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99 Ibid., p. 18
100 Home (Pol) File 64/1934, W.B.S.A.
101 Home (Pol) File 30/1/1933, N.A.I.
102 Advance, 18 January 1934; Home (Pol) File 64/1934, W.B.S.A.

telegram wanted to know why the people of Contain were asked to welcome the soldiers and salute the Union Jack and why a number of civilians were apprehended.[103]

The I.B. on whom the government had to depend most was ineffective in Midnapore prior to July 1933. But by December, its ranks were reinforced. But what was lacking in Midnapore was that the branch did not have sufficient number of agents in the town; the position in the mofussil was even worse. A secret government report admitted that intelligence faced a peculiar difficulty. The officers could not take advantage, to the same extent as elsewhere, of communal or inter-caste differences and jealousies as the "bulk of the population were Mahishyas, a caste of particular solidarity with a long record of hostility to the government.[104]

This account perhaps justifies the assumption that the Midnapore revolutionaries enjoyed a large measure of public support, although in varying degrees, not only from the urban middle class of which they were a part, but also from the peasants in the mofussil. It was indeed a unique feature not much in evidence in other Bengal districts where revolutionary terrorism prevailed.

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103 Telegram from Secy. of State for India to Chief Secy. 1 February 1934, Ibid.

104 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl. 21, p. 21, W.B.S.A.

Even in Chittagong, it was not difficult for the authorities to pick up secret agents from local people to hunt down the revolutionaries.

This unique feature merits some explanation. Unlike in other Bengal districts, the Civil Disobedience (1930-33) assumed really a mass character in Midnapore, especially in Tamluk and Contai subdivisions. The urban bhadralok as well as a considerable number of peasants, of whom the Mahisyas formed a large segment, took an active part in the Salt Satyagraha. The massive, sadistic repression against the Satyagrahis, especially against the female satyagrahis, created, in spite of the Gandhian advocacy of passive resistance, a deep and wide-spread public resentment against the British Government, and made the political soil favourable to revolutionary activities in Midnapore. The sneeking admiration of the peasantry for the revolutionaries invested the revolutionary movement in this district with a halo unattained elsewhere.

When it was found that repressive legislations, already mentioned, were not enough to contain the revolutionary movement, the government proposed and finally passed in March 1954, a more draconic act - the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment

Act, 1934[105] - subversive of what little was left of the elementary rights and liberties of the press and people.

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105 The Act supplemented the previous repressive Acts viz., the Indian Arms Act, 1878, the Explosive Substance Act, 1908, the Bengal Criminal Act of 1925 and 1930, the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931 and the Bengal Suppression of Terrorists outrages Act of 1932. Some of the clauses were of deterrent nature, but most were preventive. It proposed capital punishment for certain offences under the Indian Arms Act, 1878 and the Explosive Substance Act, 1908; forfeiture of press under the Indian Press Act; making the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925 and 1930 permanent; quickening the process of trials under the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act of 1932 and finally it empowered the magistrate to restrict the activities of associations which encouraged violence.

Chapter VII

ACTIVITIES OF THE ANUSHILAN

1932 - 1937

The Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case

Since 1930 all the top leaders of the Anushilan had been arrested and by early 1932 there was none outside the bars who was either willing or competent to put a sensational programme before the militant youths. In 1932 the Anushilan leaders in jail realised that the party had done little so far in enhancing its reputation, all the sensational outrages had been the handiworks of their rival - the Jugantar.[1] So, in 1932 in the Buxa Detention Camp the party decided to reorganise itself for an all-India insurrection. Accordingly, Prabhat Chakraborty, a leader of the revolt group fled from his village internment and he was soon joined by two detenus, Jiten Gupta and Krishnapada Chakraborty, who fled from Buxa Detention Camp by the end of 1932. He succeeded in bringing all the groups of the party, including the revolt group, under his control by early 1933[2]. But before his plan could mature, the police struck. They carried on extensive raids, arrested persons all over India and instituted a case -- the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case.

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1 Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl. 53, p. 6, W.B.S.A.

2 Ibid.

The main field of operations of the conspiracy was to be confined to Bengal, though its ramifications extended over wide areas, from Burma to Punjab and Madras. The conspiracy, so far as Bengal was concerned, was the handiwork of the Anushilan, in which Prabhat Chakraborty was the principal leader; in Punjab, it was organised in co-operation with the H.S.R.A. where the brain behind was Sitanath De.[3] The object of the conspiracy, according to an official document, was to build up an organisation for a general uprising throughout the country "with robbery, dacoity and murders as its subsidiary objects and means to the final end" -- the overthrowal of the Raj. "The model, so far as the methods of achieving the objects of the conspiracy was concerned, was Irish."[4]

According to the Prosecution Counsel, the conspiracy "was said to have gone through three well-marked stages." The first stage lasted from the arrival of Prabhat Chakraborty, Purnananda Das Gupta and Paresh Guha at Buxa Detention Camp (November-December 1930) to the escape of Prabhat Chakraborty and Jiten Gupta on 9 or 10 January and 11 February 1932 respectively. The prosecution contended that the plan of conspiracy

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3 Judgement : In the Court of the Special Tribunal at Alipore, Emperor Vs Jitendra Nath Gupta and others, ch. II, B.G. Press, n.d., p. 6.

4 Ibid., ch. XXXV, p. 298.

was hatched in the Buxa camp. The escapes of Prabhat Chakraborty and Jiten Gupta within a month of each other were no un-related events.[5] These escapes were soon followed by similar escapes, those of Krishnapada Chakraborty and Paresh Guha (November 1932). These escapes helped the party to reconsolidate its position. With this, the first stage of the conspiracy came to a close.[6]

The second stage of the conspiracy, as the Prosecution contended, "was marked by feverish activity in different directions". The stage was marked by a well-knit system of organisation with the apex body in Calcutta and subsidiary centres elsewhere. During this period the party set up a well-knit organisation. To further its object, it mainly banked on collection of money and arms.[7] In September 1932 it brought out a leaflet, Swadhin Bharat, and distributed it throughout Bengal. The aim was to boost up the morale of the cadres and also to frighten the toadies and the officers. The leaflet had for its crest a rising sun over Bengal flanked on either side by a revolver and the word Swadhin Bharat, suggesting that India was to be freed only through violence.[8] This leaflet was drafted by Satyendra Narayan Majumder, a young cadre of the party.[9]

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5 Ibid., ch. II, pp. 7 - 8.
6 Ibid., p. 8.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., ch. XXXII, p. 258.
9 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author.

Police operations towards the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933, resulted in large-scale arrests including that of Prabhat Chakraborty. In course of searches, a large volume of correspondence was discovered, which, the prosecution contended, showed the connection between different members of the party.[10] On raiding Prabhat Chakraborty's den at 11 Sitalatala Lane, Calcutta, the police seized together with arms, a series of numerical ciphers, which on being decoded, was found to be a long list of names and addresses of persons. The cipher contained details about the party's activities outside Bengal which were then conducted by Sitanath De, alias Brahmachari, who moved from place to place in the guise of a Sadhu. He and Hiren Bhattacharya were deputed for Punjab.[11]

In Bihar, the party's link man was Bhupati Das Gupta who established a number of centres there. The link between U.P. and Bengal was maintained by Shyam Behari Sukla. Bepin Chandra Das and Suresh De were considered to be the living links between Bengal and Assam. In Madras, K.B.Rao, a medical student, served as a link with Bengal. The party had also entrusted Naren Ghosh with the task of establishing contact with the Bengalis in Burma. The party also tried to extend its influences in Bombay through one Dayachand.[12]

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10 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1935 on Prabhat Chakraborty.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.

By December 1932, the police, after decoding the ciphers from a notebook containing names of members found at Prabhat Chakraborty's den at Asansol, raided all the dens and succeeded in arresting important members. By 28 December, absconder Jiten Gupta was re-arrested. By 30 December, Kishori Mohon Sen Gupta, Bimal Bhattacharya, Suren Dhar Chaudhuri and Jyotish Majumder were arrested from different dens in Calcutta. On the next day, the party's most important den at 9 Shib Thakur Lane was raided and four arrests were made. By January 1933, the police by a sudden swoop arrested a large number of persons in and outside Bengal including Rangoon. With these massive arrests, the second stage of the conspiracy came to an end.[13]

Now we can come to the third and the final stage of the conspiracy.The massive arrests, mentioned above, made the party relatively weak in Bengal. In Punjab Dhiren Bhattacharya was arrested on 22 March 1933. The police suspected him to be an absconder in the Chittagong Armoury case and following up his statement,the police arrested three persons, Jagat Bandhu Chakraborty,and two Punjabis,viz.,Milki Ram and Jagat Ram.[14] At the beginning of January 1933,Sitanath De shifted from Punjab to Madras.There he planned a raid and the Madras party headed by

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13 Ibid.

14 Judgement : In the Court of the Special Tribunal at Alipore, op.cit. ch.II, p.16. Also S.B.File (Calcutta Police) 1933 on the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case.

Nityananda Sastri and six others raided the Oty Bank on 26 April 1933 and got away with Rs.3000. But within two days, four of them were arrested. Sitanath then returned to north India and stayed there until his arrest in Banaras in November 1933.[15]

Turning to Bengal again, around March 1933, Amiya Pal and Jiten Naha started regrouping of forces from their former den at 82 Upper Circular Road, Calcutta. They worked out a plan for rescuing friends from the Presidency Jail. The party instructed Satyendra Narayan Majumder, an internee at Jessore and Pulin Baksi, interned at Hooghly, to abscond if asked and arrangements were made for the escape of detenus while being transferred to the Deoli Detention Camp from the Presidency Jail.[16] According to Purnananda Das Gupta, an accused in that case, the arrangements made were as follows : friends would board the same train and pull the chain at an appointed place where other friends would wait with a car and the detenus would immediately jump out of the train; friends outside were to keep a car and shelter ready. Nothing happened as planned.[17] The police had earlier got a scent of their plan. On searching a suitcase belonging to Satyendra Narayan Majumder, they found a letter written to him by

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 17.
17 Purnananda Das Gupta : interview with the author.

Purnananda instructing him to make arrangements for their escape. A thousand-rupee note was found beneath the lining of his suitcase. Also at the Deoli Detention Camp, when Purnananda's suitcase was searched, a letter addressed to Satyendra Narayan Majumder was discovered and it referred to that thousand-rupee note found with Satyendra. On the strength of this letter, both Satyendra Narayan and Purnananda were implicated in that case. With this, the third stage of the conspiracy drew to an end.[18]

The trial began in August 1933 and the judgement was delivered on 1 May 1935. The number of accused was forty, of whom Sitanath De and Bhupen Majumder were absconding at the time of filing the case. Jiten Naha and Hrishikesh Das Gupta were pardoned as they turned approvers. So the trial went against 36 persons. Sitanath was rearrested on 24 November 1934 and was put on trial.[19] However, during the trial Purnananda Das Gupta, Sitanath De, Niranjan Ghoshal and Haripada De absconded from the Alipore Jail on 31 July 1934 in broad daylight. Of them Haripada was arrested on the same day. The three others were arrested later in 1935 and tried in the Titagarh Conspiracy Case.

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18 Judgement : In the Court of the Special Tribunal at Alipore, op.cit., ch. II, p. 20.

19 Ibid., ch. I, p. 1.

The Tribunal in its judgement remarked that the conspiracy seemed to be entirely Hindu, confined to the unemployed youths of schools and colleges; its funds in the main were drawn from the proceeds of crimes; arms were collected through illicit sources. It further commented that the aim of the conspiracy remained unrealised and did not go beyond the stage of "a great deal of dreaming, a great deal of talking, a great deal of rather aimless activity"; yet it constituted "a very grave danger to the state and the community".[20] 31 persons were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment.The convicted persons appealed to the High Court and the sentences were reduced in some cases. Prabhat Chakraborty, Jiten Gupta and Sitanath De were sentenced to transportation for life; Purnananda Das Gupta, Dhiren Bhattacharya and Naren Ghosh to 14 years' r.i. and others to the ranging from seven to nine years' r.i.[21]

In the annals of the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal, the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case stands out not because of its performance, but because of its intentions. The conspiracy was a flop; but its authors had thought of turning the whole of India from Punjab to Tamilnadu into their theatre of operation,

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20 Ibid., Ch. XXXV, pp. 298-299; Also S.B. (Calcutta Police) File 1933 on Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case.

21 Terrorism in India, 1917 - 1936, p. 56. Both Purnananda and Sitanath were tried in absentia.

perhaps being partly inspired by the Irish model and partly by the Bolshevik model, as is evident from the kind of literature popular among the revolutionaries at that time.[22] It was already clear to the conspirators that murder of individual tyrants, however hated, had set no river on fire; that local raids, however heroic, had failed to move mountains. New responses were called for to meet new challenges. Coming on the wake of frustrating experiences of the revolutionary movement itself on the one hand, and the countrywide Salt Satyagraha and new ripplies of working-class struggles on the other, the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy stood on the razor's edge that separates one historical period from another. While the imperative necessity of waging a nationwide struggle was being slowly and painfully realised, the old "terrorist" habits of setting up secret cells in complete isolation from the masses died hard. The failure, then, was intrinsically inevitable; but the desire of the conspirators to reach out to a new horizon encompassing a whole sub-continent should not be lightly dismissed.

The Hilli Dacoity Case

During the trial of the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case, the north Bengal unit of the Anushilan decided to strike terror into the hearts of the authority as a reprisal to the above-mentioned

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22 Judgement : In the Court of Special Tribunal at Alipore, op.cit., ch. XXXIV, p. 290.

case. Moreover, the party was suffering from acute financial crisis; it needed money for the defence of the accused in the above case.[23] The Hilli dacoity was a desperate attempt on the part of the party to meet the cost of legal defences and to some extent enthuse the cadres in those days of official terrorism.[24]

The date for the dacoity was fixed on 26 October 1933. The participants, numbering 13, took shelter in the house of a Muslim sympathiser, Dr. Abdul Kader at Panchbibi, the last railway station before Hilli. This was, perhaps, a unique example of a prominent Muslim citizen taking an active part in any revolutionary exploit in Bengal.The assembled participants were Prankrishna Chakraborty, Hrishikesh Bhattacharya, Satyabrata Chakraborty, Saroj Bose, Prafulla Sanyal, Haripada Bose, Subodh Datta, Kali Sarkar, Bejoy Chakraborty, Lalu Pande, Ram Krishna Sarkar, Asoke Ghosh and Sasadhar Sarkar. Except Subodh, all belonged to north Bengal.[25]

Prankrishna was selected as leader. Hrishikesh was to assist him. Satyabrata was to cover the northern approach from which direction an enemy attack was apprehended. Subodh was equipped with a rod. Saroj was to keep the passengers at bay. Prafulla was to break-open the wooden chest in which mail bags were kept and collect the money. He was to be assisted by

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23 Satyabrata Chakraborty : interview with the author, Calcutta, May 1981.

24 Letter from Kali Sarkar to the author,Balurghat, Dinajpur, 14 December, 1981.

25 Satyabrata Chakraborty : 'Armed actions of revolutionary freedom fighters belonging to the Anushilan Samiti in 1932-33 in North Bengal';unpublished manuscript.Chakraborty was kind enough to allow the author to go through his article.

Kali, Sasadhar and Lalu, Bejoy with the help of Ramkrishna and Asoke was to cut off the telephone lines and take the sale proceeds of the day from the Hilli station ticket counter.[26]

The Intelligence Branch failed to anticipate this plan. According to an official report, the revolutionaries were "able to work unchallenged for many months in neighbouring villages until they had brought their plan to completion."[27]

On the fixed date i.e., 26 October, the party failed to carry out the plan as the station was heavily guarded by the police. Next day, they assembled near the station, took shelter in an empty bus and after midnight (28 October) when the Darjeeling Mail had steamed off the station, the party raising slogans and firing random shots, looted the mail bag and wounded six persons, of whom one died later on.[28]

After the attack, the party returned in orderly fashion but subsequently broke up into small batches. On the very next day, however, seven of them were arrested some 22 miles away due to the initiative and enterprise of a constable who had succeeded in enlisting the co-operation of a local zamindar.[29] Beaten up by the local people, other members of the group were apprehended at

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26 Ibid.
27 F.W.Robertson, Commissioner, Rajsahi Division to the Chief Secy., Bengal, 27 May 1934; Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl. 19, p. 3, W.B.S.A.
28 Ibid.
29 Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal, July - December, 1933, B.G. Press, 1934, pp.35-36.

a ferry-crossing on the river Atrayee. This shows that the revolutionaries were losing grounds among the general public. But they still had the sympathy of the educated middle class. Kali Sarkar reports that while undergoing trial, they were defended free of charges by the entire bar of the town under the leadership of Jogen Chakraborty, a respected pleader of Dinajpur.[30]

By November 1933, a Special Tribunal was formed and judgement was delivered on 27 February 1934. Prankrishna, Hrishikesh, Satyabrata and Saroj were sentenced to death while others were given transportation for life; four were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. On appeal to the High Court, the sentences were reduced to transportation for life for Pran Krishna and Hrishikesh; Satyabrata, Prafulla and Saroj too were sentenced to 10 years' r.i.; and four others to lesser terms of imprisonment.[31] This was, perhaps the only case when the government filed an appeal to the Privy Council against the verdict of the High Court. But the appeal was dismissed.[32]

The Titagarh Conspiracy Case

It has already been mentioned that during the trial of the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case, four of the accused escaped from the

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30 Kali Sarkar : Letter to the author.

31 Terrorism in India, 1917 - 1936, p. 52.

32 Satyabrata Chakraborty : interview with the author.

Alipore Jail (31 July 1934) of whom Haripada De was arrested on the same day. Within a short time of the escape, the party had arranged shelter at Bhatpara, 24 Parganas, where Purnananda Das Gupta and Niranjan Ghoshal stayed with another member, Makhan Kar, as their cook. But they had to abandon it as the landlord insisted that they should bring their womenfolk. The absconders soon rented another house at jeliapara, Khardaha, 24 Parganas where Purnananda Das Gupta, Sitanath De, Prafulla Sen and Shyam Benode Pal put up for three to four days. But that house too had to be given up as the owner insisted that either they must bring their family or shift to some other place.[33] (Similar attitude is still noticeable among landlords of greater Calcutta.) Towards the end of November, another house was hired at Belgharia where Makhan Kar, Debaprasad Sen and Priti Ranjan Purkayastha started living. Makhan assumed the name Hem Babu, Debaprasad was introduced as his elder brother and Priti Ranjan as the latter's brother-in-law.[34]

The members of the party soon got tired of the dull absconding life and wanted to do something outstanding and worthwhile. With this aim in view, Niranjan Ghoshal was sent to Jamshedpur in December 1934, and arrangement was made to procure sticks of

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33 Judgement in the Titagarh Conspiracy Case : In the Court of Special Tribunal at Alipore, Emperor Vs Priti Ranjan and others, Vol. I-IV, vol.1,Ch.II, B.G.Press, 1937-38, p. 13.

34 Ibid., p. 14.

dynamite from the collieries. Niranjan had full discussion with another member, Santosh Sen, about the possibilities of looting the treasury of the Imperial Bank.[35]

On 28 December, the group held two secret meetings, one at a vacant house at Sukchar, Sodepur and other at the den at Belgharia where amongst other members Purnananda, Debaprasad, Sitanath and Priti Ranjan were present. An elaborate discussion was held on the present situation and programmes of future uprising and subsequently a plan for uprising in the near future was adopted. It was resolved in the Belgharia meeting that Purnananda would be in overall charge of the party; Niranjan would be in charge of the action squad; Debaprasad would take the charge of north Bengal and Santosh would learn the technique of making explosives.[36]

The police, however, got scent of the Belgharia den and kept watch on it from 24 December 1934. On 30 December the den was raided. The police arrested Priti Ranjan with incriminating letters, notebooks, ciphers and other documents in his possession.[37] Early next morning Debaprasad, with a book on infantry training and a notebook containing names of party members in cipher, was

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35 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1935 on the Titagarh Conspiracy Case.
36 Ibid.
37 Terrorism in India, 1917 - 1936, p. 63.

arrested by the police. 15 days later Prafulla was arrested at Sukchar by a village defence party.[38]

The final blow on the Anushilan fell in the shape of a raid on 20 January 1935. An anonymous petition was received by the S.D.O., Barrackpore on 20 November 1934 complaining that an uptodate young girl was living in a rented house of one Siddheswar Halder of Titagarh and there seemed to be no male member living with her; but some unknown young men used to visit her daily after dark and leave the place before dawn.[39]

Acting on this information and suspecting that some arms and ammunitions were likely to have been stored there, the police raided the house.The presence of the police did not go unnoticed by the inmates.The front door of the house was quickly opened and shut again and within a few minutes two men appeared on the roof and jumped down on the courtyard and started running away. Both of them, however, were apprehended. One of them was Purnananda Das Gupta and the other was Shyam Benode Pal.[40]

The door of the room was barred from inside.The police demanded that it should either be opened or they would be forced

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38 Judgement in the Titagarh Conspiracy Case, op.cit., p.14.
39 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1935 on the Titagarh Conspiracy Case.
40 Ibid. Also Purnananda Das Gupta : Biplaber Pathe, 1st ed., Calcutta, 1364 B.S., pp. 162 - 163.

to break it open. Then the door was opened by a young girl who gave her name as Surama Debi (Khuki). She was no other than Parul Mukherjee, who was also living the life of an absconder. She was arrested immediately.[41] Why did she delay in opening the door? Purnananda Das Gupta says that Parul, as instructed beforehand, was busy in burning the incriminating papers.[42] Over 300 documents and 60 material exhibits were seized during the search. It was on the basis of those finds that the police alleged that Titagarh was the headquarters of the conspiracy. Several books were seized; of them three were on revolution, eleven on war and technical aspects of military science.[43] A large quantity of chemicals for making explosives, chemicals for preparation of smoke bombs and grenades and a few measuring scales etc. were seized.[44] From papers seized during the raid, the police got names and addresses of several other persons who were soon tracked down : Santosh Sen in Barisal, Govinda Mallick and Haren Munshi in Calcutta, Niranjan Ghosal and Jiban De in a train in Patrasayar, Bankura, Harihar Das in Manbhum, and Rabindra Ghosh in Jamshedpur.[45]

The police originally submitted charge sheets against 33 persons, but as Santosh Sen and Bijoy Pal Chaudhuri turned

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41 Ibid.
42 Purnananda Das Gupta : interview with the author.
43 'A note on the Titagarh Conspiracy', prepared by the State Committee for compilation of History of Freedom Movement in India, Bengal Region, W.B.S.A.
44 Ibid.
45 Judgement in the Titagarh Conspiracy; op.cit., p.7.

approvers, the case was finally instituted against 31 persons. The trial by a Special Tribunal commenced on 16 November 1936 and the judgement was delivered on 24 April 1937.The Tribunal unanimously held that the chief leader of the conspiracy "to wage war against the king" was Purnananda Das Gupta and "it was round his den that the whole conspiracy was centered."[46] On his escape from jail on 31 July 1934 when he was an undertrial prisoner in the Inter Provincial Conspiracy Case, he had set his hand to the task of infusing new life into the conspiracy. In less than six months, he had got the organisation well under his control and thrown himself actively into the work of bringing about another conspiracy.[47] According to the Tribunal, the person second to Purnananda was Prafulla Sen who worked several years tirelessly in the interests of the conspiracy.[48] The Commissioners held that Shyam Benode Pal was Purnananda's right hand man and was in charge of bringing supplies to the den. Next in importance was Debaprasad Sen, a "leading recruiter and organiser of what might be called a terrorist army."[49]

Purnananda Das Gupta was sentenced to transportation for life, Prafulla Sen to 12 years' r.i. and 15 others ranging from 10 years to three years.[50] Considering the age and sex of

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46 Ibid., Ch. XVIII, p. 198.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Terrorism in India, 1917 -1936, p. 63.

Parul Mukherjee, the Commissioner sentenced her to no more than three years' r.i.[51] The rest were acquitted. All the convicted prisoners appealed to the High Court but their appeals were dismissed.[52]

The Titagarh Conspiracy, in spite of its imposing title, was somewhat of a non-event. The conspiracy could not advance beyond the stage of preliminary planning and preparation. It was, in fact, nipped in the bud. While other conspiracies could at least reach the stage of direct action, this one crashed before it could take off. This was as much due to the heightened vigilance of the secret police as the inexperience of the conspirators themselves. But perhaps this was due to an even more basic cause. By the end of 1935, the objective political conditions in the country were no longer suitable for the "terrorist" mode of struggle against the Raj. Its inadequacies were by now laid bare while other and more effective forms of mass struggle were already abroad. With the failure of the Titagarh Conspiracy, the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal, like an expended candle sputtered and died.

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51 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1935 on the Titagarh Conspiracy Case.

52 Ibid.

Chapter VIII

FROM REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM TO SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

I

During the 20s of the present century the revolutionaries, with a record of setbacks on hand, started re-thinking about the path they should traverse in future. For them, the period of painful reapprisal had already begun. This was the period when important events were taking place in the arena of national and international politics. Within India Gandhiji emerged as the national figure and geared the nation to an unprecedented mass-struggle; in the international field, some of the colonial countries threw away or were about to throw away the foreign yoke. All these events, and above everything else the October Revolution, deeply stirred the minds of the revolutionaries of Bengal. It would,however, be wrong to conclude that all the revolutionaries began to think in the same way. Different trends and views became apparent among them. The old guards saw in the October Revolution a victory of the oppressed people against an oppressive government, "a triumph of social justice" and, above all, the first triumph of an armed revolution in their lifetime.[1] Only a few among them tried to understand the social character,aims and methods of the Bolshevik

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[1] Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author.

revolution. Upen Banerjee, an old leader of the Jugantar, started writing a series of articles in the Atma Sakti on the October Revolution. M. N. Roy used to send the Vanguard to Banerjee who truthfully reproduced them in the Atma Sakti and the Amrita Bazar Patrika. He also wrote in support of organising peasants and workers and thus did much to attract the younger generation of revolutionaries towards communist ideas.[2] Besides the Atma Sakti, a spate of newspapers came out during the 1920s - the Dhumketu, the Bijoli, the Sankha, the Desher Bani - which published articles upholding the new social order created by the victorious Bolsheviks.

A quotation from an article on Lenin in the Atma Sakti would reveal the minds of some of the contemporary Bengal revolutionaries :

" ... The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, have emerged victorious. The imperialists are on the run ... The victorious Bolsheviks are spreading throughout the world the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. The oppressed people to-day look forward with hope of salvation towards Lenin and the Bolsheviks."[3]

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[2] Ibid.
Also Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit., pp. 126 - 127, 135.

[3] Atma Sakti, Calcutta, 18 April 1923.

The Sankha published an article by Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta, an early communist, in which he wrote that the main task ahead was the economic and social liberation of the masses and to guard them against all kinds of oppression.[4] More examples can be cited from these papers to show that the Bengal revolutionaries were striving hard to understand the significance of the October Revolution. If one scans the articles published in those papers, one can surely conclude that the revolutionaries during the early 20s were making frantic attempts to overcome "romantic revolutionism, emotionalism and amorphous dreams of social justice".[5]

A section of the young, responsible revolutionaries by the mid-20s began to try and organise the peasants and workers and disseminate socialist ideas among the middle-class youth.[6] Dharani Goswami, for example, saw in the Non-Cooperation movement the potentiality of a mass upsurge. His attraction to socialism was further increased by reading India in Transition, jointly written by M.N.Roy and Abani Mukherjee, and the Vanguard which the younger people used to read seriously.

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[4] Sankha, Calcutta, 30 October 1922.

[5] Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit., p. 131.

[6] Satyendra Narayan Majumder : 'Bharater Swadhinata Sangrame Jatiya Biplabi Andoloner Bhumika'; Saradiya Kalantar, Calcutta, 1386 B.S., p. 44.

The arrival of Nalini Gupta and of Abani Mukherjee in India in 1922, both as representatives of the Communist International, considerably influenced Goswami's friends in the Anushilan. They were given shelter because they had come as messengers of a new social order.[7] But this view of Goswami has been contested both by Gopen Chakraborty and Satis Pakrasi. According to Chakraborty, the Anushilan agreed to give Nalini Gupta shelter, not because they were attracted by communism, but because they needed his expertise in manufacturing bombs.[8] According to Satis Pakrasi, the Anushilan sheltered Abani not because it was attracted to communism but because Abani had promised to help them in organising armed struggle.[9] Whatever the motive may have been, both these emissaries succeeded to some extent in spreading communist ideas among a section of the Bengal revolutionaries; and though they did not yet break away from the parent parties they, nevertheless, developed a new orientation towards socialism and were having the first glimpse of a new horizon.

By 1923, the authorities apprehended danger from communism and Cecil Kaye, the Head of the Intelligence Department, decided

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[7] Dharani Goswami : interview with the author.

[8] Gautam Chattopadhyay and the author's interview with Gopen Chakraborty, published in Gautam Chattopadhyay's book Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1970, p. 128.

[9] Ibid., p. 146.

on a prompt action to nip this danger in the bud.[10] Early in 1924, the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case was launched against the communists. But the authorities failed to isolate the embryonic communist movement from the main stream of the national movement. Rather, this pre-emptive blow only helped to popularise communism.[11]

By 1925, Gopen Chakraborty returned from Moscow and created a fresh stir in the Anushilan. He toured extensively in the peasant belts of Hazong, Mymensingh; lectured on communism and tried to organise the peasants. He also contacted his old friends in the party, who were drawing closer to the toiling masses. As for example, Prabhat Chakraborty started the House of Labour in Comilla with financial assistance from Mahesh Bhattacharya, a great homeopath of that area.[12] Dharani Goswami started co-operative farming at Cherrapungi, Assam.[13]

In 1926, in a Conference at Mohonganj, Mymensingh, the new converts tried to carry the Anushilan with them but failed. As a result, there was a split and a new group with socialist

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[10] Gautam Chattopadhyay : Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement, p. 75.

[11] Ibid., p. 83.
Also, letter from Kali Sarkar to the author.

[12] Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the author.

[13] Dharani Goswami : interview with the author.

orientation emerged with Moni Singh, Gopal Basak, Ashu Roy, Dharani Goswami and others who formed the Workers' and Peasants' Party (1926). As discussed earlier, this party endeavoured to organise the mill-workers on both sides of the Ganges and made itself popular among them.[14]

Alongside this growth of trade union activities, communist ideas began to penetrate among students and young men. This too has been briefly discussed in chapter IV. Sudhindra Mohon Majumder, an organiser of the All Bengal Students' Association (A.B.S.A.), came in contact with socialist ideas by reading M.N.Roy's paper, the Vanguard, and Shaw's An Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism.[15] Satyendra Narayan Majumder, a leader of the A.B.S.A., has stated that in north Bengal the ideas of socialism reached him through the Anushilanite Biren Datta who gave him Imperialism by Lenin. He also got Ten days that Shook the World from a member of the Jugantar.[16] At the request of Nalini Kishore Guha, Satyendra Narayan Majumder wrote two articles in the Bangler Bani : 'Russian Revolution and Lenin', and 'Economic interpretation of history and future society'.[17] In the second article, the writer,

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[14] Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the author.

[15] Sudhindra Mohon Majumder : interview with the author, Khardha, 24 Parganas, December, 1981.

[16] Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author.

[17] Bangler Bani, Dacca, 36th issue, 23 Bhadra,1339 B.S. and 47th issue,22 Agrahayan, 1339 B.S.

while expressing his confidence in the masses stressed, at the same time, the vital role of heroes. Evidently, the appeal of the old doctrines of active heroes and passive masses was still irresistible.

The first group of the revolutionaries who broke away from the Anushilan and espoused the cause of communism established a communist organisation -- The Young Comrade League (Y.C.L.) in 1928 to which a brief reference has been made in an earlier chapter. Its first secretary was Dharani Goswami. During its brief life, the League championed the cause of peasants and workers and to some extent succeeded in disseminating communist ideas among the young men. Perhaps the most important episode in the life of the Y.C.L. was the fight it put up on behalf of the oppressed peasantry of Hossainpur in the Kishoreganj sub-division of Mymensingh. The peasants were exploited by landlords and money-lenders (dadandars) who in lieu of money used to mortgage their tamsuks (deeds) and forced them to work in their lands without any remuneration. The Y.C.L. under the leadership of Nagen Sarkar and Sudhangshu Adhikary raised the slogan of abolition of landlordism. The house of a notorious landlord, Kesto Babu of Jangaila, Kishoreganj, was raided by the oppressed peasants. It was labelled by the government as a communal riot. Warrants were issued against the leaders; some were apprehended; four were hanged.[18]

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[18] Sudhangshu Adhikary : Letter to the author; Tribeni, Hooghly, 31 December 1981.

Unfortunately, most of the revolutionary leaders too condemned this peasant struggle as a communal riot against the Hindus, as most of the landlords and money-lenders were Hindus. Thus Suren Ghosh despatched his followers to Kishoreganj,[19] and Sitangshu Dutta Roy (Khusu) went there with arms "to teach the Muslims a lesson". So did some other militants of the Anushilan.[20]

Perhaps the most important trend during this period came to be known as Terro-Communism. This trend tried to combine violent actions, insurrections, individual assassination etc. with socialist propaganda and the organisation of peasants, workers and youth. They believed in two-front organisations -- (a) to unite the workers, peasants and middle classes and preach socialism among them; (b) to maintain, at the same time, the secret organisation for collecting arms and striking the government at opportune moments. The second front was considered to be vital as it would rouse the people by heroic activities of the few.[21] Up to the end of the First World War, the hope of receiving arms from abroad had fuelled the imagination of the revolutionaries and sustained their morale in difficult times. But in the mid 20s, such hope, because of changed international situation, became dimmer and dimmer and the revolutionaries were compelled to depend more and more on internal

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19 Pramatha Gupta : interview with the author, Dum Dum, Calcutta, February, 1981.

20 Sitangshu Datta Roy (Khusu) : interview with the author, Calcutta, February, 1981.

21 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author.

supply of arms. The importance therefore of building up local resources, multiplication of contacts at grass-root levels, in short, mass contact, began to figure more prominently in their plans and programmes. This shift in emphasis was perhaps another factor that facilitated the transition from the doctrine of individual terrorism to the ideology of militant mass movement. The best representative of this trend was the Hindustan Republican Association (H.R.A.), later renamed as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (H.S.R.A.), which in 1931 at the Karachi Congress session pledged itself to give up revolutionary terrorism and decided to follow the path of mass movement. In the second half of the 30s, it not only worked among the workers, peasants and young men but also took initiatives in the formation of a communist organisation.[22]

This terro-communist trend also derived nourishment from national and international events. Ranen Sen, a revolutionary with some inclinations towards communism and now a CPI leader, wrote that the strikes of the textile workers of Bombay under Dange, Mirajkar and Joglekar in 1928-29 and the Jute workers' strike and the strike of railway workers of Lilooah in Bengal stirred the country profoundly.[23] Reading Marx for the first time, Ranen Sen realised that the workers were the real force for changing the world

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ranen Sen : Banglay Communist Party Gathaner Pratham Jug (1930-48), 1st ed., Calcutta, 1388 B.S., p. 22.

and he decided to become a communist. But he admitted that he could not give up his attachment for the secret revolutionary party. He was in two minds.[24] What was true for Sen was also true for others who were still incapable of making the final choice between revolutionary terrorism and communism. Nalini Das writes that he was deeply impressed by the march of forty-five thousand workers to the Congress Pandal in Calcutta in 1928 and by the railway workers of Khargpur who marched in protest against the brutal firing in the Hijli Detention Camp. All these events cast a spell on him; yet he could not break away from the old revolutionary path.[25]

The government instituted the Meerat Conspiracy Case (1929) against the communists to isolate them from the main stream of national life; but the attempt proved abortive. The revolutionaries closely followed the proceedings of the case and were deeply influenced by the courageous stand of the communists. This went a long way to bring them closer to communism.[26]

The Meerat case was a temporary setback in the communist movement.Soon however it regained its momentum. The impetuosity of

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[24] Ranen Sen : Ibid., pp. 21 - 22.

[25] Nalini Das : Swadhinata Swangrame Dwipantarer Bandi , 1st ed., Calcutta, 1974, pp. 98 - 99.

[26] Kali Sarkar, an accused in the Hilli Dacoity Case in a letter to the author wrote elaborately how the young revolutionaries were impressed by the proceedings of the trial.

strikes of the workers of Girni Kamger Union, Bombay, involving 64 mills and 1,09,232 workers,[27] and a series of workers' struggles elsewhere, made government somewhat nervous. It commented that the recent industrial strikes in Bombay and Calcutta had shown that the Indian communists were gaining hold over the organised workers.[28] All these must have acted as a catalytic agent in the ideological transformation of the young revolutionaries.

Besides their growing familiarities with the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, the Economic Depression of 1929-30 in the Capitalist World and the success of the First Five Year Plan in the Soviet Union could not but have, by their stark contrast,hastened this process of change, as Makhan Pal, a young Anushilanite and now the State Secretary, Revolutionary Socialist Party of India admits :

"We had before us a clear picture of the two worlds : the capitalist world, full of unemployment, poverty and exploitation and the Soviet world, where the problem of unemployment was practically solved and the minimum necessity of livelihood was guaranteed. If India was to be freed, this type of social system must be established."[29]

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[27] Subodh Roy (ed.) : Communism in India - Unpublished Documents, 1925 - 1934, 1st ed,Calcutta,1972,p.307.

[28] India and Communism, p. 19.

[29] Makhan Pal : interview with the author,Calcutta, December, 1981.

Kali Sarkar, a young cadre of the Anushilan, looked at the Depression as a "crisis in the mode of production in the Capitalist World"; side by side, in the success of the Soviet Union in solving the problems of unemployment, he found the "basis of a scientific and balanced mode of production." He and his like-minded friends were deeply influenced by this new experiment in the Soviet Union - the abolition of unemployment at a time when unemployment figures in the Capitalist World had reached colossal proportions. Events in the Far East - the pursuit of Sun Yat Sen's Three Principles and Three Peoples' Policies in China by the embattled Communist party - deepened their attachment for socialism.[30] In short, they were being swept on by world tides and their outlook was widening to encompass world events. The scales of narrow political outlook were falling from their eyes.

Outside the official communist circle, there was one outstanding individual, Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta who converted a large number of young militants to Marxism-Leninism. As noted in a previous chapter, Dr. Datta returned from Moscow in 1925 as a confirmed communist. According to a government report, since his return to India he persistently endeavoured to "convert the Young Men's Associations in Bengal into the vehicles for spreading communism." In this effort he was supported by Dharani Goswami.[31]

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[30] Kali Sarkar's letter to the author.

[31] F.P. McKinty : Terrorist Conspiracy in Bengal from 1st July to 31st December, 1927, p. 11.

Dr. Datta maintained close touch with the militant students because in them he found the future hope of communism. Saroj Mukherjee, then a budding revolutionary and now the Secretary of the West Bengal Unit of CPI (M) reports that during 1926-30 Dr. Datta addressed almost all the Students and Youth conferences throughout Bengal and that his was the unique contribution in winning over a large number of young men to communism. Mukherjee is full of gratitude for Dr. Datta for having shown him the correct path.[32] Tushar Chatterjee, an old revolutionary, tells us that Dr.Datta brought a large section of the revolutionaries and Salt Satyagrahis, who attended the Socialist Conference in Burdwan in 1931, to the fold of communism.[33]

Dr. Datta gave a concrete shape to this trend by forming an organisation - The Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party (I.P.R.P.) in 1930. According to a secret official report, its aim was to bring about independence by "proletarian revolution and mass-violence". Most of its members were connected with the H.S.R.A. group of Jyotish Ghosh through Baren Chatterjee of Uttarpara. This party was friendly to the C.P.I. and the W.P.P. and worked in close co-operation with them.Dr.Datta worked hard among the industrial workers in Bengal.[34] Dr. Datta maintained

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[32] Saroj Mukherjee : interview with the author, Calcutta, February, 1982.

[33] Tushar Chatterjee : interview with the author, Hooghly, November, 1981.

[34] Subodh Roy : op.cit., p. 395.

personal contact with the young members of both the Jugantar and the Anushilan and non-attached young radicals. As a result, most of his adherents came from the rank of the revolutionaries. Though he had an apathy for the Gandhian leadership, yet some of his followers participated in the Civil Disobedience movement preaching communism, advocating stoppage of taxes and other revenues.[35]

There is no gainsaying the fact that during 1926-32, Dr. Datta, through his persistent efforts, which included organisation of numerous study circles, succeeded in bringing about a pro-socialist atmosphere conducive to the appearance of newspapers like the Swadeshi Bazar (1928-29) published from Chandernagore and edited by Jyotish Ghosh and Kalicharan Ghosh; the New Light(1930-31) published from Calcutta and edited by Santosh Mitra; the Sphulinga (1930) published from Hooghly and edited by Kalicharan Ghosh; and the Gananayak (1930-32) of the IPRP group of Hooghly.[36]

Nevertheless, the terro-communists could not yet rise above romantic revolutionary ideas; rather most of them were swayed violently by the Chittagong uprising, the assassinations of British

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[35] Bejoy Modak : interview with the author, Howrah, November, 1981.

[36] Saroj Mukherjee : interview with the author. The author had the good fortune of going through the pro-socialist writings of the Swadeshi Bazar from a private collection of Haripada Mukherjee, ex-MLA, Chandernagore.

magistrates in Midnapore, the storming of the Writers' Buildings, etc. For them, spectacular actions still held greater appeal than socialist theories of mass upsurge. This led to a curious paradox. In the Buxa Detention Camp (1931) a compromise was effected between the revolt section of the Anushilan and the leaders. The leaders accepted socialism as their goal but could not resist the younger elements who were clamouring for violent actions. Having agreed on a compromise between communism and individual violence, Jiten Gupta and Krishnapada Chakraborty fled from the Buxa Detention Camp and Prabhat Chakraborty fled from his internment[37] the details of which have already been discussed. Tushar Chatterjee, who had espoused socialism after having attended the study classes of Dr. Datta, arranged shelters at Chandernagore for Nalini Das, Sachin Kar Gupta and Dinesh Majumdar who escaped from the Hijli Detention Camp and Midnapore Jail in 1932.[38] Hare Krishna Konar, Benoy Chaudhuri and Saroj Mukherjee (who was then a candidate member of C.P.I.), members of the I.P.R.P. were arrested in 1932 in connection with violence.[39] Although all of them had already chosen the socialist path, their old affiliations and links had landed them in jail. The irony of the situation was that they were penalised for a cause to which they no longer subscribed.

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[37] Krishnapada Chakraborty : interview with the author.

[38] Tushar Chatterjee : interview with the author.

[39] Saroj Mukherjee : interview with the author.

It would not be out of place to ask why did the terro-communists in spite of the magnetic appeal of socialism continue to swim with the old tide ? Satyendra Narayan Majumder in his book and also in an interview with the author has tried to give an answer. His points are (a) the Bengal revolutionaries were totally disillusioned with the compromising manoeuvres and inadequacies of the Congress leadership especially during the Salt Satyagraha. (b) Moreover, the left-wing inside the Congress was not strong enough to take over the leadership and initiate mass action against British rule. (c) The wholesale arrests of communist and labour leaders and of young men goaded the revolutionaries to continue with terrorism. It is no wonder that Jatin Das and Bhagat Singh became their idols. (d) Lastly, there was no organised communist movement in India as an alternative rallying-point, nor was there any leader of Lenin's stature who could sympathetically assess the different streams of national movement, point out the path ahead and tell the revolutionaries what was to be done. To add to these difficulties, there were no "serious and systematic efforts towards winning over the national revolutionaries, particularly the terro-socialists" by the communist leaders.[40]

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[40] Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit., pp. 194-196. Also interview with the author.

After the Chittagong uprising and subsequent actions, the government let loose a policy of wanton repression; hundreds of youngmen were apprehended; the revolutionary organisations were in complete disarray. A re-thinking began in 1930-32 among the revolutionaries, both inside and outside jails. What did they gain! Were all these sufferings worthwhile ? What next ? Those who were still evading arrests began to ponder over the tragic failure of their mode of struggle. Disillusioned as well by the failure of Gandhiji's movement of 1930-31, they also lost all confidence in the line of co-operation with the Congress as advocated by some dadas. They now started reading Marxist literature to get out of the rut.[41] According to Makhan Pal, the re-thinking started after 1930 but the process gathered force only after 1932 in jails and detention camps. To quote him,

"Lives of numerous comrades had been sacrificed; hundreds were lodged in conspiracy cases leading to more confessions and more round-ups. But we could not reach even the fringe of freedom. What, then, was the way out ?"[42]

This type of heart-searching started everywhere - in the Alipore Central Jail, the Presidency Jail, the Hijli Detention Camp, the Buxa Detention Camp, the Deoli Detention Camp, the Andamans and in other jails in the main land. A confidential

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41 Promode Das Gupta : interview with the author, Calcutta, November, 1981.

42 Makhan Pal : interview with the author.

report says that the revolutionaries in camps and jails got opportunities, which they had not got before as they were constantly harassed by the police, "to meet together, to exchange ideas, to discuss the weakness of their organisations ... to prepare plans for the future".[43] Many of them, after reading the Marxist-Leninist classics and holding prolonged debates and discussions, finally accepted Marxism.[44] This process of conversion was also hastened by an appeal - Indian Revolution and Our Task - published in the name of CPI, Calcutta Committee,1933, and smuggled inside prisons. This document, after praising the revolutionaries for their courage and selflessness, pointed out that their movement had no connection with the masses, the workers and the peasants and hence it was wrong to hope that their isolated attempts would destroy imperialism. It appealed to them "to preach for the cause of violent Indian Revolution among the masses under the leadership of C.P.I. to rouse the masses into an armed revolt."[45] For a proper understanding of the process it is better to follow the events as they unfolded themselves from jails to jails and from camps to camps.

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43 Note on the Policy and Activities of the Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939,compiled from records in the Intelligence Branch,C.I.D., Bengal; B.G. Press, 1940, p. 1.

44 Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya : 'From National Revolutionary Politics to Non-Conformist Marxism'; The Calcutta Journal of Political Studies,Vol.I,No.I,Calcutta, 1980, p. 105.

45 Indian Revolution and Our Task,Manifesto of the CPI (Calcutta Committee),Calcutta, 1933, p. 3.

II

Alipore Central Jail

Re-thinking started in the Alipore Central Jail since 1930-31 with the study of available Marxist books. Biren Banerjee reports that in that jail he met communist leaders like Abdul Momin and Bankim Mukherjee who inspired him to read communist literature. Being religious minded, he could not reconcile himself with Marxist atheism. When he was told that communism did not believe in God or Soul or life hereafter, he could not sleep for two to three nights. To quote him :

"I was mentally disturbed when I heard that Soul and God do not exist. In an anguished state of mind, I asked Bankim : 'Does soul exist ?' He gave me a negative reply and advised me to study seriously. I started reading A.B.C. of Communism by Bukharin, Lapidus's economy and some other books by Darwin, Engels, Marx and Lenin. Gradually a realisation came that neither Gandhism nor terrorism but only communism could lead to India's emancipation."[46]

Many a convert had to pass through similar psychological turmoil and for similar reasons. To reject one ideology and to accept another, some of whose basic tenets are diametrically opposite, is always a painful exercise. Formerly, the revolutionaries adhered

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[46] Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.

to the idealist philosophy and combined their militant nationalism with a deep religious fervour. Now, they were called upon to shift their allegiance to a school of philosophy which does not recognise the existence of any metaphysical force. The two schools of philosophy, the idealist and the dialectical materialist, are poles apart. The changeover from the belief in primacy of consciousness to the belief in the primacy of matter is anything but easy. The belief that the Supreme Being is the final arbiter of all human affairs had to yield to the belief that man makes his own history. It was almost a revolutionary change in the thinking process and such a change is never painless.

In fact, this change in the basic philosophical outlook was the most difficult hurdle for the revolutionaries to cross. They could negotiate the other hurdles with relative ease. As for example, the abandonment of the old method of struggle was much easier, because by the time they were imprisoned by the early 30s, their disillusionment with their past practice was almost complete. After this, disenchantment with the old dadas could not be far away. But baptism in the new materialist philosophy was a different and far more difficult process.

Naren Sen of Barisal, now a CPI (M) leader, remembers that Kali Sen, a communist trade-unionst who was transferred from the Buxa Detention Camp in 1931 had brought with him some Marxist classics. Study circles were formed and when Naren Sen was back

in the Alipore Central Jail in late 1932, he found that collective reading of Marxist literature was in full swing, the teachers being Mukul Sen of Barisal and Hiren Datta Gupta of Dacca.[47]

Kali Kinkar De, an accused in the Chittagong Armoury Case, who was lodged in that jail in 1934 said that inspired by Abdul Halim, Saroj Mukherjee and Somnath Lahiri, he started studying Marxism.[48] The re-thinking which started at the initiative of Satis Pakrasi, Bankim Mukherjee and others was re-inforced by Halim, Lahiri and Mukherjee. Perhaps the credit of organising the communist-minded detenus and convicts in that jail into a Communist Consolidation and the publication of a theoretical communist mouthpiece, the Bolshevik, belongs to Halim and Saroj Mukherjee.[49] This development did not escape the notice of the government. To quote a government report :

"The organisation of party cells, units and consolidations (an auxiliary communist organisation) began with the arrival of Abdul Halim in 1934 and Saroj Mukherjee in 1935. Communication was established with the prisoners in the Andamans ... Eventually in Alipore Central Jail, Marxist League came into being and managed to issue,with fair regularity,a manuscript monthly magazine."[50]

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47 Naren Sen : interview with the author, Calcutta, December, 1981.

48 Kalikinkar De : interview with the author.

49 Saroj Mukherjee : interview with the author.

50 Note on the Policy and Activities of the Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939; p. 2.

III

Presidency Jail

Similar heart-searchings began among the detenus in the Presidency Jail in 1930. Prabhat Chakraborty, who was lodged there in 1930, found one kitchen for all. But with the influx of prisoners, the demand arose for more kitchens. But the division of kitchens was not on party lines and at the beginning, the prisoners were friendly to one another. But later on, the kitchens came to be divided on party lines.[51]

Reminiscing on the events in that jail, Tincowri Mukherjee, a member of the I.P.R.P., notes that in 1932 Bankim Mukherjee used to take regular classes on Marxism at the Presidency Jail. He, together with his friend Bejoy Modak, attended the classes, read all three volumnes of Capital and became inclined to communism. But he was in a dilemma. He could not reconcile himself with the materialist approach of Marxism. He still believed in the idealist philosophy as propagated by Sri Aurobindo. Later on, in 1934 he became a full-fledged communist in the Deoli Detention Camp after having gone through the painful process of ideological remoulding.[52]

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[51] Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the author.

[52] Tincowri Mukherjee : interview with the author, Chandernagore, Hooghly, November, 1981.

Satyendra Narayan Majumder, who was in the Presidency Jail in 1934, recalls that the Anushilan by then had accepted socialism and instructed its members to study Marxism. In the Anushilan kitchen regular classes were held and they were well-attended. Among the books he read were Laski's Grammar of Politics, Shaw's Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism, and H.G. Wells' Work, Wealth and Happiness. He himself was already conversant with Marxism and had read Letters from Russia, by Rabindranath Tagore, and was deeply impressed by Tagore's eloquent praise of the success of the social system in the Soviet Union. But a confusion arose in the kitchen as to the type of socialism the party preferred. Some dadas were pro-Hitler; those who were pro-workers and pro-peasants were laughed at. From his personal experience he came to the conclusion that the Anushilan itself could not be converted into a communist party because of its ideological heterogeneity.[53]

The Jugantar kitchen was reportedly allergic to reading. Most of its members spent their time in gossip and play. Only a few pondered over their past tragic failures and began to show some urge for socialism. Noteworthy among them were Triguna Sen, later on the Vice-Chancellor of Jadavpur University, and A.K. Saha, a public figure in later years.[54]

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[53] Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author.

[54] Ibid.

The third kitchen consisted of the communists and others who were not attached to any party. Bhabani Sen held regular classes in the Presidency Jail and taught socialism to the members of the Anushilan, the Jugantar and the communist group.[55] As a cumulative effect of all these studies, a new wind began to blow among a considerable section of the prisoners who discussed and debated on the significance of the October Revolution, the role of the Congress movement and the futility of their past revolutionary venture. However, there was resistance from other groups. Gradually, the hostility wore out and the three kitchens unitedly observed May Day.[56] The communists and the like-minded prisoners united themselves in 1936 when both Halim and Saroj Mukherjee spent some time there and in that year the Communist party unit was formed. This developed into what was known as the 'Red Front Organisation' "embracing Communists, socialists and unattached revolutionaries ... The Communist element was decidedly the most powerful in this amalgamation."[57]

IV

Hijli Detention Camp

There is ample evidence to show that the revolutionaries lodged in the Hijli Detention Camp started thinking seriously about the causes

55 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1929 on Bhabani Sen Gupta.
56 Ibid.
57 Note on the Policy and Activities of the Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939, p.2.

of failure of their past activities since the early 30s. According to Shib Sankar Mitra, a detenu in that camp, Bhabani Sen and Abdul Momin started the process of self-introspection among the political prisoners from 1931-32. Mitra was in a dilemma; intellectually he moved half-way to communism but could not accept atheism. Moreover he was dissatisfied with the superior air of the communists who suffered from sectarianism of the Communist International (C.I.). The communist leaders at that time looked down upon the national leaders as bourgeois and the revolutionaries as mere dacoits and murderers. This sectarian attitude gave rise to some reservations in the minds of those who were already intellectually convinced of the correctness of Marxism-Leninism.[58]

The Hijli Detention Camp was divided into three separate kitchens based mainly on ideological beliefs and not so much on the old organisational loyalties.[59] According to Santimoy Roy, a member of the Jugantar, the Jugantar kitchen consisted of the Jugantar, the B.V., Sri Sangha and some of the Chittagong revolutionaries. They were, by and large, aggressive nationalists and read avidly the

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[58] Shib Sankar Mitra : interview with the author. VI Congress of C.I. in a thesis, 'Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies' gave a call to the communists "to unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress" and considered it to be a reactionary bourgeois organisation.

[59] Santimoy Roy : interview with the author, Calcutta, May, 1981.

literature extolling Hitler and Mussolini. The dadas, in order to protect their followers from the communist influence, arranged parades, military training etc. and instructed them not to mix with the communists as they were nothing but foreign agents. Roy became a victim of these slanders but only for a while. The life-style of some of the communist leaders also irritated him; but Bhabani Sen and Momin were loved and respected by all. Roy read Tagore's Letters from Russia and then a few outstanding Russian novels like Gorky's Mother, Tolstoy's Resurrection, Turgenev's Virgin Soil and two years later, Solokhov's And Quiet Flows the Don and The Don Flows to the Sea. Gradually, he overcame his earlier fascination for the Irish and Italian model of freedom struggle and came over to the path of Bolshevik Revolution. It was in the Hijli Detention Camp in 1935 that he took the final plunge and became a regular student of Marxism. It was also in that Camp that Roy read in The New Statesman and Nation, the news about Dimitrov's histo-ric trial and the Spanish Civil War. The courage shown by Dimitrov in the Nazi trial room and the epic heroism of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War made a tremendous emotional impact on him and finally in 1937 in the Berhampore Detention Camp he joined the Communist Consolidation.[60]

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[60] Ibid.

Kali Sarkar, who had been in the Hijli Detention Camp in 1934, says that regular classes were held on the causes of the rise of Hitler, the Three Principles of Sun Yat Sen and Dimitrov's trial. Of these, the last topic impressed him most.Each class was attended by 30 to 40 students; after the classes were over, the students had to do home-work.The curriculum contained courses on dialectical materialism, historical materialism, Marxist economy, bourgeois economy, history of China and the world.There was a common room library which contained Indian and foreign journals and magazines. Students were asked to prepare written reviews of what they had studied during the month and by turn had to submit them before the general meeting of the communist kitchen.[61] Bhabani Sen was one of the best teachers in the Camp,who with the help of Sachin Mitra succeeded in spreading communist ideologies and winning over a large section to communism.[62]

But the inroad of the communist ideology was deeply resented by the dadas of different parties. Many of the important members of the Anushilan like Biren Datta of Comilla, Biren Datta of Jalpaiguri and Bibhuti Guha of Bogra who had already joined the communists declined to leave the Anushilan kitchen and it was alleged that they instigated other members to join the communists.

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61 Kali Sarkar : Letter to the author.

62 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1929 on Bhabani Sen Gupta.

This attempt of the pro-communists was resisted by the leaders but hardly with any success; and a feeling of bad blood developed between the communists and their fellow-travellers on the one hand and the anti-communists like the hard-core of the Anushilan, the Jugantar, Sri Sangha and the B.V. on the other.[63] The anti-communist frenzy reached its height in the camp. The Jugantar, in order to spite the communists, named a dog after Stalin. They told the communists, "Are you not ashamed of taking food from the capitalists? Take communist food." Their malicious behaviour soon crossed the limits of decency and endurance.[64] Tension gradually mounted leading to clashes in 1935. Soda water bottles, brick-bats, rods and lathis were freely used.The communists saved themselves by erecting barricades of ironcots.[65]

After this bloody clash, the inmates of the Camp were sharply polarised. On hearing of this incident Abdul Halim and Saroj Mukherjee sent instruction from the Presidency Jail for forming a well-knit organisation of the communists and like-minded people.As a result, a Communist Consolidation was formed in the Hijli Detention Camp in 1936[66], with the handwritten organ,the Abhijan as its mouthpiece.[67]

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63 Makhan Pal : interview with the author.

64 Bibhuti Guha : interview with the author,Calcutta, September, 1981.

65 Ibid.
Also Makhan Paul : interview with the author.

66 Saroj Mukherjee : interview with author.

67 Kali Sarkar claims that the mouthpiece of the Consolidation was the Abhijan. But Bibhuti Guha claims that the name of the organ was The Communist.

What were the criteria of giving membership to the Communist Consolidation ? It is said that every candidate for membership had to study Marxist literature and submit a thesis on a particular aspect of communism. It was examined by a council of four appointed for the purpose and if the thesis was of the expected standard, the candidate was given membership and he was required to take an oath of secrecy.[68]

V

Buxa Detention Camp

The kitchen in the Buxa Detention Camp in 1930 included members of the Anushilan, the Jugantar, the B.V., Sri Sangha and communist leaders like Kali Sen, Nalindra Sen, Abdur Rezzak Khan, Moni Singh and others. But during the late 30s there was an increasing demand for separate kitchens and barracks.[69] Why ? An intelligence report provides the answer. Sharing the same kitchen afforded the members of different groups an opportunity to exchange views among themselves; some began to study books on communism.[70] This made the dadas a bit nervous and they demanded immediate division of the kitchen to keep their ranks in tact. The Jail Superintendent of the Buxa Camp reported that Bhupati Majumder of the Jugantar once

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[68] Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal (January to August, 1938), B.G.Press, 1938, p. 17.

[69] Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the author.

[70] Note on the Policy and Activities of the Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939, p. 1.

met him and asked if he could start a separate kitchen as he was fed up with the joint kitchen system.[71]

In the same letter, he noted that in the camp there existed a "deep seated bad feeling between the Jugantar and the Anushilan" and as soon as Majumder was allowed to start a separate kitchen, others insisted on having kitchens of their own.This led to the split in the camp on party lines; there was chaos when the cook had left in the kitchen 300 eggs, a maund of milk and bread. These were looted by some younger members of the two parties.[72]

Biren Banerjee who went to the Buxa Camp in 1931 had a very dismal experience of such petty jealousies among the leaders. On his arrival in the camp, he was asked by the Camp Commandant as to which kitchen he would like to be affiliated. He found three separate kitchens : the Jugantar kitchen led by Bhupati Majumder and Suren Ghosh, the Anushilan kitchen led by Trailokya Chakraborty and Pratul Ganguly and the third kitchen shared by communists like Kali Sen, Abdur Rezzak Khan,Moni Singh and revolting elements of the Jugantar like Panchanan Chakraborty, Amalendu Das Gupta,and Phani Majumder. Whenever a new prisoner arrived, leaders of rival kitchens crudely tried to win him over to their side.The third kitchen,however,was free from this ugly competition.[73]

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71 E. Finney,Jail Super,Buxa Camp to Hutchings,21 December, 1930; D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1929 on Pramatha Bhowmick Part I.

72 Ibid.

73 Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.

Banerjee tried to iron out the differences and proposed for their amalgamation. But the Jugantar leaders vehemently opposed this proposal.They prevented their members from mixing, playing and even talking with the members of other kitchens. To what extent petty jealousies could go, can be guessed from the following incident. Banerjee was in charge of the camp library. One day Suren Ghosh came to him and demanded the division of the books of the library. Banerjee became angry and told him "please come next morning. I will burn all the books and you will have your share of the ashes." On that very night, at about 10-30 p.m. Suren Ghosh came to see him and talked up to 2-30 a.m. Ghosh confessed that his party was not a monolithic one but a confederacy. So he feared that if the followers were allowed free mixing, they might be lost to other ideologies.[74]

But the anti-communist outlook of the dadas could not hold back the tide.A few of their members took up serious study in order to enlarge their mental horizon, being disgusted with petty quarrels.Gopal Halder and Jyotish Ghosh became the spokesmen of this new trend.[75]

The Anushilan leaders were reportedly less sectarian. According to a government report, Trailokya Chakraborty and Pratul Ganguly "were holding regular classes and giving their followers regular training on socialism."[76] It further said

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 D.I.G.,I.B.Bengal File 1931 Note on Terro-Communist Conspiracy.

that the intention of the Anushilan was to work on socialist lines for a certain period of time during which they hoped to organise workers and young men and then give the signal for insurrection throughout Bengal, Punjab and elsewhere.[77] In view of an understanding with the old Anushilan leaders the revolt group wanted immediately a more radical programme to which the leaders did not agree in toto. As a result, the revolt group chalked out a programme, laying stress on

(a) mass organisation,

(b) mass revolution as a result of which the foreigners would be driven out of India,

(c) destruction of capitalism,

(d) establishment of commune and communism.[78]

Members of the revolt group declared their intention to work under the old Anushilan provided its leaders accepted their programme and changed its name from the Anushilan to the Social Democratic Republican Party or something like that.[79] Prabhat Chakraborty states that the idea of changing the name of the party was temporarily suspended; the Anushilan leadership however accepted the other proposals of the revolt group.[80]

Pramatha Bhowmick, who was in the Buxa Camp in 1932, has described the ideological development in the third kitchen. Kali Sen used to take classes on Marx's Capital. Another teacher in

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the author.

the kitchen was Jamaluddin Bukheri.[81] While others devoted their time to the study of Marxism and self-introspection, the B.V. headed by Satya Gupta and Bhabesh Nandi spent their time reading Mein Kampf and books eulogising Hitler and Mussolini.[82] The literary association of the camp held general debates which were open to all kitchens. On one such occasion (1932), Anil Roy of Sri Sangha presented a paper denouncing dialectical materialism. Roy was backed up by the die-hard anti-communist Amalendu Das Gupta and opposed by Pramatha Bhowmick. The socialist-minded detenus were elated and they celebrated the occasion by playing on gramophone records. In short, the intellectual life in the camp was in a ferment.[83]

At the beginning, the communists suffered from the sectarianism of the new converts. Rezzak Khan was of opinion that they should form a united front with other patriotic elements.[84] Others

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81 Pramatha Bhowmick : 'Bandishala Theka Prantare' : The Kalantar, published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the C.P.I., W. Bengal unit, pp. 50 - 51.

82 Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.

83 Pramatha Bhowmick: op.cit., pp. 52 - 53.

84 Pramatha Bhowmick: op.cit., p. 53.

still under the spell of the VI Congress of the Communist International wanted to oppose it. Thanks to the decision of the VII Congress,[85] sectarianism was overcome and the communists resolved to pursue the united front tactics. Thereby the communists succeeded in wining over a large number of detenus belonging to other parties. According to a government report, the detenus in the Buxa Camp denounced 'terrorism' and espoused communism. In a meeting (1932) attended by Pratul Bhattacharya, Panchanan Chakraborty, Jyotish Ghosh, Pramatha Bhowmick, Sudhangshu Adhikary, Rezzak Khan and others, it was decided that the various small groups-the communists, the socialist republicans and the revolt group would combine together and work in harmony. The decision was also communicated to like-minded friends in other jails and camps.[86]

The communist group published a paper - The Communist - in 1933 which contained polemical articles and theoretical writings.[87] The rise of Hitler and Dimitrov's thesis on united front were discussed in this paper. The polemics and intensive studies in the camp swelled the communist rank and in 1936 the Communist Consolidation was formed in the Buxa Detention Camp.[88]

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85 VII Congress of the C.I. directed the Communists to work unitedly with other nationalist forces.
86 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1929 on Pramatha Bhowmick, Part I.
87 Promode Das Gupta : interview with the author.
88 Saroj Mukherjee : interview with the author.

VI

Deoli Detention Camp

The Deoli Detention Camp in the desert of Rajasthan consisted of five camps, each with 100 detenus. Unlike other camps and jails, the Deoli camp was not divided into party kitchens. Rather each camp included detenus belonging to different parties. To what was this peculiarity due ? A plausible answer, given by Pramatha Gupta of the Mymensingh Jugantar who belonged to Camp No. II from 1933-1936, is as follows: Anderson, the Governor of Bengal apprehended that if the detenus were allowed to run party-wise kitchens, the communists would succeed in increasing their followings and consolidating their position; on the other hand, if they were allowed to live in mixed camps, they would be lost in the crowd.[89] This did not materialise, even if Anderson had so hoped.

The process of self-introspection started among the detenus of the Deoli Camp from 1932 when there was a rush for Marxist literature. The thirst for new knowledge among the young detenus alarmed the dadas, who had remained anchored to their old ideological moorings.[90] Biren Banerjee who lived in Camp No. IV from 1931 to 1936, states that young members of the Jugantar used to come to him under the cover of darkness and asked for Marxist bcoks; they read the books throughout the night to

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[89] Pramatha Gupta : interview with the author.

[90] Ibid.

hoodwink the dadas and returned them before dawn. Banerjee noticed one peculiarity in the situation; before the formation of the Communist Consolidation, the young detenus of other parties did not dare to break with their dadas, but secretely equipped themselves with the new ideology and took the final plunge only after the Consolidation was formed.[91]

Pramatha Gupta had similar experience. He was asked by his leaders Shyamananda Sen and Kohinoor Ghosh of Mymensirgh not to mix with the communists who lived in Camp No. I. He ignored the ban and attended the classes on Marxist philosophy and ultimately joined the communist rank.[92]

In the Anushilan, the ideological struggle followed a somewhat different course. The debate began among the detenus as to whether they should follow dialectical materialism or dialectical idealism. Secondly, the Datta-Bradley Thesis, which by then had reached India, instructed the communists to give up sectarianism and form united front with the nationalist forces. On this issue too, an ideological battle ensued. A section of the Anushilan, despite its acceptance of the Marxist principles, did not agree to owe allegiance to the Third International. It decided to chart out its future policy independently and drafted a programme. The

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[91] Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.

[92] Pramatha Gupta : interview with the author.

other section, however, joined the C.P.I.[93]

The smaller groups like the B.V., Sri Sangha and Bani Sangha were bitterly anti-communist, not so much on personal, as on ideological grounds. Hem Ghosh and others scoffed at socialism. Jiten Ghosh, a young member of the B.V., later on a C.P.I. leader of Dacca, recalls in his memoirs how Hem Ghosh tried to dissuade him from joining the communists with the following arguments : "Why do you attend the communist classes ? We have got top educationists amongst ourselves. It is unbecoming of you to mix with those who want to destroy our culture,heritage and who, above all, are enemies of the national movement."[94] The communists, then numerically weak, were subjected to banters and insults. At the instigation of the dadas, their followers even refused to take food from the mess managed by the communists. In this anti-communist outcry, all the political parties, in spite of their mutual wranglings joined their voice in a single chorus and indulged in character assassination of the communists.[95]

The communists carried on ideological battles undaunted. Bhabani Sen, Panchugopal Bhaduri, Kali Sen, Pramatha Bhowmick and, later in 1936, Dharani Goswami (who after his release from

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93 Makhan Pal : interview with the author.
R.P. Dutt and Ben Bradley of the C.B.G.B. after the VII Congress (1935) addressed a communication to the C.P.I. entitled :'Anti-Imperialist people's front in India' - generally known as Datta-Bradley thesis.This instructed the C.P.I. to form an united front with all the nationalist elements.

94 Jiten Ghosh:Jail Theke Jaile,1st ed.Dacca,1376 B.S.,p.115.

95 Ibid., pp. 109 - 112.

the Meerut Conspiracy Case was re-arrested and detained in the Deoli Camp) organised study classes round the clock. This attracted detenus affiliated to other parties. [96] There was a general urge to attend the communist classes. "At 5 p.m. when the detenus were allowed to move about, they, instead of wasting time in gossip or play, attended the classes of Bhabani Sen. These classes gave them relief and mental sustenance for future course of action."[97] The communists in Camp No.II brought out a paper (the Proletariat) which upheld the theory of mass revolution. To counter this propaganda, Rebati Barman and Nepal Nag of the B.V. thought of bringing out a rival paper and to this aim borrowed books on communism from the communist inmates. Ultimately they themselves joined the communist rank.[98]

Thus, the communists grew in number. A government report admitted that the communists in the camp were "gaining ground and a new party - the Marxist Group - came into being with dictatorship of the Proletariat as its ideal."[99] This landslide in favour of communism did not go unchallenged. One day Subodh Mukherjee of the Anushilan and Kshitish Bhowmick of the B.V. attacked Bhabani Sen, Panchugopal Bhaduri and Jiban Maity and seriously injured them.

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96 Dharani Goswami : interview with the author.
97 Jiten Ghosh : op.cit., pp. 118 - 119.
98 Sudhangshu Adhikary : Letter to the author.
99 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1929 on Pramatha Bhowmick, Part I.

Bhabani bled profusely but he would not disclose the names of the assailants, for which he was punished by the jail authority. Hem Ghosh of the B.V., Anil Roy of Sri Sangha, Shyamananda Sen, Kohinoor Ghosh, Hari Kumar Chakraborty of the Jugantar and Ashu Kahali of the Anushilan blessed the assailants, while a large number of the young detenus owing divergent loyalties expressed their sympathy for the victims. Disobeying the mandates of the dadas, many detenus started reading communist literature and openly attended the study classes taken by the Communists.[100] As a result, there was a re-grouping, not on old party lines, but on the basis of communist ideology. An attempt is made to show how the detenus of different parties responded to this new ideological challenge.

(a) The Anushilan : This party in the Deoli Camp was led by Ashu Kahali, Jiban Guha Takurata of Faridpur and Atin Roy of Comilla. They were in favour of forming an organisation on socialist lines, but did not favour communism. They were waiting for the views of their leaders like Pratul Ganguly, Rabi Sen, Ramesh Acharya, Trailokya Chakraborty. But Sudhangshu Adhikary of Mymensingh and a few others declared themselves as communists.

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[100] Pramatha Gupta : interview with the author.

Biren Chatterjee of Faridpur and Jnan Majumder of Mymensingh left politics because of their advanced age and their pre-occupations with family affairs.[101]

(b) The Anushilan Revolt Group (A.R.G.) : All the detenus of the A.R.G. were communists at heart and intended to work on communist lines. But they had not proclaimed their new faith as they did not know as yet the views of other friends in different camps and jails.This group was led by Josoda Chakraborty of Chittagong, Brojen Das, Rabindra Kar of Dacca,Amulya Lahiri of Pabna, Dhiresh Roy and Sailesh Chakraborty of Barisal and others. They also sent instructions to friends confined in other jails to study communist literatures and work on communist lines. Instructions to this effect were sent to members outside.[102]

(c) The Bani Sangha : Most of the members of this group including leaders like Basanta Roy, Sudhir Bose, Prafulla Datta accepted communism.[103]

(d) The Jugantar :

(1) The Munshiganj group led by Prafulla Chatterjee declared themselves as communists and worked hard to win new converts.[104]

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101 D.I.G.,I.B. Bengal File 1923 on Niranjan Sengupta, Part IV.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.

(2) The Sankar Math group led by Rakhal Das, Nayan Ranjan Das Gupta and others of Barisal became communists and were equally zealous in the propagation of this new faith.[105]

(3) The Jessore-Khulna group under Nirmal Das and Pramatha Bhowmick joined the communists.[106]

(4) The north Bengal group led by Bani Bagchi, Suresh Roy and Mani Krishna Sen too became communists.[107]

(5) Bepin Ganguly of the Atmonnati joined the communists but with reluctance and reservations. His associates like Ganesh Mitra, Jiban Maity of Howrah, Fakir Roy of Burdwan, Khagen Maity and Sachin Maity of Midnapore also became communists. They did not however owe allegiance to Bepin Ganguly and were trying to form a separate group.[108]

(6) The members of Purna Das's group of Faridpur were staunch anti-communists and stuck to the old principles and methods of violent actions. Amalendu Das Gupta, a leading member of this group gave up politics.[109]

(7) The members of Mymensingh group led by Shyamananda Sen were against communism. They still upheld the old path.[110]

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105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid. Saroj Mukherjee told the author that Bepin Ganguly joined the communist with a hope that he would be given a prize post in the C.P.I., but he resigned from the party in 1938 when he was denied that post.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

(8) The Chittagong group was led by Jatin Rakshit. But his transfer from the camp created a void in his group. As a result, a section was won over by the Madaripur group, while others joined the communists.[111]

(e) I.P.R.P. : Bejoy Modak, Tincowri Mukherjee of the I.P.R.P. went over to the communists and succeeded in taking their followers with them.[112]

(f) B.V. : The B.V. led by Hem Ghosh was bitterly anti-communist. Ghosh guarded his followers so jealously that whenever any of them was found talking with a communist or found with a Marxist book, he was taken to task and the book found in his possession was torn to pieces.[113]

(g) Sri Sangha : The detenus of Sri Sangha could not decide which way to go. A small section of them became socialists but could not proclaim their new faith because of the hostile attitude of Anil Roy. Roy said that he would rather give up politics than join an organisation which was anti-God. His inflexible stand notwithstanding, leading members of his party like Nepal Nag of Dacca, Lalit Barman of Comilla, Rebati Barman of Mymensingh broke with Sri Sangha and embraced communism.[114]

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

According to an I.B. report, among the communists too, there sprang up two distinct groups, one led by a veteran communist like Dharani Goswami and the other by those who had only recently espoused communism. The second group was headed by Bipin Ganguly. Goswami pleaded that in future the detenus should forget their old allegiance and become members of the C.P.I. and leadership of the Party would be decided by merit and not by seniority in age. The group led by Ganguly wanted a communist organisation but an old party lines and promised that at the time of action, all these groups, though they might march separately, would strike together.Goswami was supported by Nirmal Das, Pramatha Bhowmick, Rebati Barman, Bejoy Banerjee and Sudhangshu Adhikary; Ganguly was supported by Sushil Chatterjee of Krishnanagore, Bejoy Modak, Tincowri Mukherjee, Nepal Nag and others. Constant quarrels went on between the two groups to gain new adherents to their respective viewpoints.[115]

Bejoy Modak told the author that the main problem was how to absorb the new converts. One group wanted to recruit new members directly to the party and give them membership; the other group was of opinion that the new recruits from different

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[115] D.I.G. I.B. Bengal File 1928 on Sushil Chatterjee, Part I. Dharani Goswami in his interview with the author questioned the authenticity of the above-mentioned report.

parties should, first of all, secretly equip themselves ideologically and only then should they be taken inside the party; in the meanwhile, they should not be exposed. This was the crux of the differences between the two factions.[116] Niranjan Sen who had been sent to the Deoli Camp from the Andamans tried to unite these factions but failed.[117] The Deoli Jail Committee sent a detailed report to the Central Committee, C.P.I. Saroj Mukherjee and Abdul Halim sent instruction on behalf of the Bengal Committee, C.P.I. from the Presidency Jail asking both the factions to unite and form a consolidation. In response to this call, the Communist Consolidation was formed in 1936 with a constitution.[118] The constitution laid down the following conditions of membership :

"The membership is always open to those (a) who have given up old group relations, (b) who promise to support the decision of the C.P.I., the Communist International and its branches in jails and outside, (c) who are willing to submit to the discipline of the Communist Consolidation ungrudgingly and unreservedly, and (d) who pay regular subscription to the Consolidation."[119]

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116 Bejoy Modak : interview with the author.
117 Ibid.
118 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1929 on Bhabani Sen Gupta. Also interview with Saroj Mukherjee.
119 Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal (January to August 1938), Appendix A, p. 16.

The Consolidation brought out bilingual weeklies, the Sanghati in Bengali and the Communist in English. Both of them contained theoretical articles on Marxism-Leninism, mostly written by Sushital Roy Chawdhuri, Bhabani Sen, Dharani Goswami, Fakir Roy and others. The Consolidation arranged mock mass-meetings to train up its members as effective public speakers, so that they might rouse and organise the masses after their release. They also arranged general mass meetings of all the inmates of the camp and observed different occasions like May Day, October Revolution Day, 26th January etc.etc.[120] The authority kept a watch on the activities of the Consolidation; sometimes raided the meeting-place of the communists and seized the books.[121] But the activities of the Consolidation, specially their study classes, could not be checked. The author had the good fortune of going through a note-book containing class-notes, belonging to Tincowri Mukherjee who was detained in the Deoli Camp during 1933-1937.[122] The notes present some striking features :

(a) These were written in Bengali and at a time when there were hardly any books on Marxism in Bengali.

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120 Dharani Goswami : interview with the author.

121 Home (Pol) File 45/6/1936. N.A.I.

122 The author procured this note-khata in December,1981 from Tincowri Mukherjee who was lying ill at Gondalpara, Chandernagore.

(b) The notes were made directly from Marxist classics like Marx's Capital, vol III, Engels' Anti Duhring etc. Surely these were not easy books to read. Immense pains must have been taken to prepare the notes in Bengali. This testifies to the seriousness of the teachers who conducted the classes.

(c) The subject matter of the notes was almost exclusively economic, e.g., the development of the capitalist mode of production, nature of commodity production, use of value and value of commodities, economic foundation of the basic contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, etc. Dialectical materialism, Marxist epistemology, history of the international working class movement, history of the Indian national movement do not figure at all in his notes.

(d) Was this then the basic standard syllabus for study classes in the Deoli Camp ? The question is not easy to answer.

VII

Berhampore Detention Camp

Among the detenus of the Berhampore Detention Camp in 1930 were such outstanding leaders as Trailokya Chakraborty, Kedareswar Sen, Pratul Ganguly of the Anushilan; Moni Singh, Jamaluddin Bukhari of the C.P.I.; Panchanan Chakraborty and Sukomol Roychaudhuri of the Jugantar. At the beginning, the kitchen was united but an

under-current of tension disturbed the even tenor of life. As the detenus had realised the futility of their old line and were groping towards communism the leaders were afraid of losing their cadres to a new ideology and the war of nerves began.[123]

In the Anushilan Camp, there were two types of detenus - one spent their time in play and gossip; the other devoted all the time at their disposal to serious study. Sudhangshu Sarkar of the Anushilan belonged to the second type and read Capitalism in Crisis by John Strachey, Fundamentals of Marxism by Litvinov and other books on the popular front.[124]

It is learnt from Narayan Biswas, a young militant of Dacca Jugantar that after 1930-31 the camp was divided into three separate kitchens. The few communists in the camp (1932) were subjected to ill-treatment including threat of physical assault from rival groups. To fight back communism better, he started reading Marxist classics but gradually came to realise that the old revolutionary path was wrong, that the Gandhian path would end in compromise with imperialism and the future belonged to communism. Ultimately he switched over to communism.[125]

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[123] Biren Banerjee : interview with the author.

[124] Sudhangshu Sarkar : interview with the author, Calcutta, September, 1981.

[125] Narayan Biswas : interview with the author, Calcutta, November, 1981.

Ajit Ganguly of the Jugantar, now a leader of the C.P.I., states that his conversion from "terrorism" to communism was not easy. He had to pass through a prolonged period of mental agony. During that difficult period, he profitted much by reading progressive Bengali journals like the Parichaya and the Prabasi, which were smuggled in. The book reviews in the Parichaya by Dhurjoti Mukherjee, an eminent intellectual, economic writings of Radhakamal Mukherjee, a renowned economist, and articles by intellectuals like Sudhin Datta and Hiranmoy Datta helped him to a great extent to find his way out of the ideological impasse. In the Jugantar kitchen, he together with his friends Bhupesh Gupta (later on a C.P.I. M.P.), Satyen Sen of Dacca, and Abani Bagchi of Rangpur started a pro-socialist hand-written magazine, the Parikrama, which contained articles on Marxism.[126]

The part played by the Parichaya in this process of conversion to socialism was considerable. Susobhan Sarkar, a Marxist intellectual, wrote, "I first began writing in Bengali in the Parichaya in 1931. Later on, I was happy to learn that many in the detention camps profited from my writings."[127]

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126 Ajit Ganguli : interview with the author, Calcutta, May, 1981.

127 Susobhan Sarkar : 'Mane Pare' : Kalantar, Published on the occasion of 50th anniversary of the C.P.I., W. Bengal, Calcutta, p. 39.

An idea of the study-course followed in the Berhampore Detention Camp can be obtained from a note-book belonging to Bhupesh Gupta. The probable date of this note may be either 1932 or 1936,[128] the exact date of this note book can not be determined, as its author is no longer alive. The contents of the notes are as follows :

(1) Economic Theory of the Leisure class by N.Bukharin.

Chapter I - Economic foundation of the Theory of Marginal Utility and of Marxism.

Chapters II and III - The Theory of Value.

Chapters IV and V - The Theory of Profit.

(2) An Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy by Karl Marx.

(3) Socialism - Utopian and Scientific by Federick Engels.

(4) Poverty of Philosophy by Karl Marx.

Some observations on the notes may tentatively be made. The subject matter deals almost exclusively with the economic aspects of Marxism and the tenets of political economy. Hence it must have been a bit too stiff for beginnners or new converts.

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128 Santimoy Roy : interview with the author. The author got this notebook from Roy who is not sure about the date of the notes.According to him, Bhupesh Gupta was in Berhampore Detention Camp first in 1932,then in 1936.

For a proper understanding of the notes, the academic standard of the participants must have been quite high. May be, these were personal notes of Bhupesh Gupta, meant for his own understanding and use or for the use only of the advanced students. The notes betray a keen desire to grapple with and master the deeper intricacies of Marxist theory and not just tinkering at the subject. For beginners and for those who were academically backward, simpler courses of study must have been used. But as yet they remain untraced. The absence of any reference to the history of our national movement in general and revolutionary movement in particular does not necessarily mean that these topics were not discussed and debated. Perhaps other note-books, which the author could not trace, dealt with such related topics.

The news of the pro-socialist orientation of the detenus reached Abdul Halim and Saroj Mukherjee in the Presidency Jail through Bhupesh Gupta who was transferred there from the Berhampore Detention Camp in 1937. They immediately instructed the converts in Berhampore to consolidate themselves and in August 1937, the Communist Consolidation was formed with the following members: Nirmal Bhattacharya of Comilla, Suniti Bose of the Atmonnati, Ashu Bhardwaj of Ranpur, Mohini Bagchi of Midnapore, Sunil Mukherjee of Bihar, Abani Bagchi of Rangpur, Sishu Mandal of Bankura and Santimoy Roy of Mymensingh who became the secretary of the Consolidation.[129]

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[129] Santimoy Roy : interview with the author.

The Consolidation was divided in its attitude towards the national heritage. One section held that a true communist should break away from his nationalist past and undertake self-criticism in order to purify himself. To this group belonged Nirmal Bhattacharya, Suniti Bose and others. The other section held that the communists should not discard their national heritage, but should join in the observance of national days etc. Santimoy Roy was the spokesman of the second viewpoint and being disgusted with the quibblings inside the Consolidation, he resigned from the post of the secretary. Fortunately, Dharani Goswami arrived in the Behrampore Camp from the Deoli Camp in late 1937 with the message of the United Front tactics as initiated by the VII Congress of the Communist International and the controversy soon came to an end.[130]

VIII

The Andamans

The government's practice was to ship the more dangerous revolutionaries to the Andamans. 25 deportees sent in September 1932 included Ganesh Ghosh, Ananta Singh, Lokenath Bal, Ananda Gupta, Phani Nandi, Subodh Chaudhuri, Subodh Roy, Sahayram Das, Lalmohon Sen, Fakir Sen, Ranadhir Das Gupta, Sukhendu Dastidar - all of the Chittagong Armoury Raid Case; Kalipada Chakraborty of Chittagong,

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[130] Santimoy Roy : interview with the author.

a convict in the Chandpur Shooting Case (1930); Haripada Bhattacharya, convicted in the Asanulla Murder Case (1931); Prabir Goswami convicted in the Nagergaon Dacoity Case, Mymensingh (1931); Probodh Roy of the Salda Dacoity Case (1931); Sushil Das Gupta of the Putia Mail Robbery Case (1931); Biren Roy and Manoranjan Guha Thakurta convicted under the Arms Act (1931); Suresh Das convicted in the Armenian Street Dacoity Case; Nishi Kanta Roychaudhuri and Mukul Sen of the Dalhousie Square Bomb Case (1931); Bimal Das Gupta of the Peddie Murder Case (1931); and two other cooks, Haripada Mandal and Rabindra Mandal.[131] The first batch was soon followed by other batches and gradually the number of convicted political prisoners in the Andamans rose to 400.[132]

The life in the Andaman Cellular Jail was hellish. The prisoners had to suffer torture of the most sadistic nature on flimsy grounds, were deprived of wholesome food and elementary facilities like reading, writing and playing. As a protest against all these maltreatments, the prisoners went on hunger strike in May 1933. It continued for 45 days, resulting in three deaths, those of Mahabir Singh of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, Mohit Moitra of Arms Case and Mohon Das of the Mymensingh Conspiracy Case.

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131 Prabir Kumar Goswami : interview with the author, Siliguri, October, 1972.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

Their martyrdom was not in vain. The prisoners succeeded in realising some of their demands. The authorities promised to provide them with good food, newspapers and books for reading and lamps at night. Penal labour was practically abolished.[133]

After recovery from the exhaustion of the hunger strike, the prisoners organised a library with books presented to them by the national leaders. The books were mainly on economics, history, philosophy, science and fiction. They were even allowed weekly overseas editions of The Statesman, weekly the Sanjibani, the Andaman Bulletin which gave them a brief outline of the events taking place in the national and international spheres. Then began the process of mutual discussion, self-criticism and a re-appraisal of their revolutionary past.[134]

Bejoy Kumar Sinha, a prisoner at the Cellular Jail wrote :

"We were realising that our methods had to be changed, that we had to wage our struggle against imperialism with a new weapon, a new technique. We felt that the sacrifice of the revolutionaries during the last three decades had undoubtedly infused life into the hearts of our countrymen but the price was too dear ... we started systematic study of world history, politics and economics."[135]

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133 Ibid.

134 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit., pp. 253 - 54.

135 Bejoy Kumar Sinha : In Andamans - the Indian Bastille, 1st ed. Kanpur, 1939, p. 19.

They set up a secret library of Marxist books. Most of them were smuggled in; due to shortage of books, these were copied out in longhand and were circulated to the readers.[136] Nalini Das wrote that two books -- The Communist Manifesto and Socialism - Utopian and Scientific, which were smuggled in, helped him to make up his mind. He came to the conclusion that if they were to rebuild India on democratic and socialistic lines, there was no alternative to the acceptance of Scientific Socialism. He and his friends further realised that if their aim was to build up a new society for the toiling masses, then they must be communists.[137] Realising that revolutionary terrorism was no answer to the new challenge, Satis Pakrasi also started reading Marxist literature in the Andamans and gradually drew towards communism.[138] Similar self-introspection began among many others in the Cellular Jail during 1933-1934.

In April 1935, a batch of political prisoners arrived at the Andamans from the Alipore Central Jail with a message from Abdul Halim and Saroj Mukherjee, a copy of Draft Platform of Action of the C.P.I.[139] and a report on the general political

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136 Prabir Goswami : interview with the author.

137 Nalini Das : Swadhinata Swangrame Dwipantarer Bandi, pp. 113, 143.

138 Satis Pakrasi : Agni Juger Katha, pp.222-223.

139 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit,pp.258-259. This thesis was published by the C.I. which advanced tasks before the Indian Communists:Complete independence of India by violent overthrowal of British rule, establishment of Soviet type of Govt.,confiscation of all private properties without compensation, adoption of 8-hour working day and radical improvement of the conditions of labourers etc.

situation in India. They requested the communist-minded prisoners, on behalf of the C.P.I., to consolidate themselves, organise study classes, extend influence on other groups and above all, try to unite the political prisoners against the repression of the authorities. This message created a stir among the pro-communists belonging to the Anushilan, the Jugantar, the B.V., the Chittagong group and the H.S.R.A., and on 26 April 1935, the Communist Consolidation was formed in secret with 35 members and the decision was made known to others on 1 May.[140] They were (1) Niranjan Sen, (2) Dr. Narayan Ray, (3) Batukeswar Datta, (4) Bejoy Kumar Sinha (5) Dr. Gaya Prasad, (6) Shib Verma, (7) Joydeb Kapur, (8)Kamalnath Tewari (9) Kali Chakraborty, (10) Nalini Das, (11) Rabi Neogi, (12) Randhir Das Gupta, (13) Kedar Sukul, (14) Jogen Sukul, (15) Bimal Das Gupta, (16) Haripada Chaudhuri, (17) Amalendu Bagchi, (18) Keshab Chatterjee, (19) Jagadananda Mukherjee, (20) Kundal Lal Gupta, (21) Chitta Biswas, (22) Deb Kumar Das, (23) Gopal Acharya, (26) Lalmohon Sen, (27) Bangeswar Roy, (28) Hare Krishna Konar, (29) Ramesh Chatterjee, (30) Ananta Chakraborty,(31) Dhrubesh Chatterjee, (32) Sachin Kar Gupta, (33) Nani Das Gupta, (34) Bijan Sen, and (35) Ananda Gupta.

The Consolidation adopted a constitution which laid down

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140 Nalini Das : op.cit., pp. 147 - 148.

certain pre-conditions for admitting a new member, e.g., (a)When a new member was to be admitted, he must satisfy the committee about his personal life and political past; (b) the member must write a thesis on an aspect of communism; (c) all members admitted to the party in jail should be regarded as provisional party member; they should be formally and finally admitted into the party only on the basis of their actual work after release; (d) whenever a comrade was released, the committee must give him a credential and send a detailed report about him, about his past record, his conduct inside the jail, loyalty, ability etc.[141]

One of the main tasks before the Consolidation was how to frame the right kind of syllabus for the Marxist education of its members. It was resolved to turn the jail into a Marxist University. A study board was formed and it decided that every member should compulsorily attend the classes. Since all the members were not of the same academic standard, they were classified into different groups. (1) The first group was composed of members who had some working knowledge in English and in politics. (2) The second group was composed of those who had school education up to VIII-X standard. (3) The third group comprised those who could read and write Bengali. (4) The fourth group included those who had little

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141 Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal (January to August, 1938),1938, Calcutta, Appendix 'A', p. 16.

or no education. Teachers were selected for each group;punctual attendance was enforced and teachers and students alike were to participate in discussion every fortnight.[142]

The Consolidation faced serious problems regarding teaching. Firstly, some of the teachers lacked adequate competence in the subject they were asked to teach. The second problem related to the syllabus; none had any previous experience of running a political school. So the members sat together, constantly exchanged opinions and finally, through trials and errors, succeeded in overcoming the drawbacks.[143] According to Nalini Das, classes were held on general history and geography for the students of third and fourth group. For the advanced students Marxist classics were prescribed. The classes were held between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. and in the afternoon from 1-30 p.m. to 3-30 p.m. Dr. Narayan Roy used to take classes on Marx's Capital and Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution, Niranjan Sen discussed the Fundamentals of Leninism by Stalin.[144]

Satyendra Narayan Majumder who had been a member of the Consolidation, wrote that the teachers used to start classes with introductory lectures on the progress of human history starting

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142 Nalini Das : op.cit., p. 151.
143 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit., p. 262.
144 Nalini Das : op.cit., pp. 151 - 152.

from primitive communism to capitalism. While discussing the history of India, they had to bank on bourgeois writers as books by progressive authors were banned. But prison officials were liberal about books on international history and politics. Periodicals and newspapers like International Affairs, World Review of Reviews, The Times, The New Statesman, The New York Times etc. were allowed inside. Books on Fascism like Menace of Fascism by L. Strachey; Hitler over Europe and Hitler over Russia by Ernest Henri; Spain in Revolt by Garrer and also books on China like China in Revolt and Inner History of Chinese Revolution by Tang Leang Li were passed after being censored.[145] Marxist books were banned. Engels' Anti-Duhring, Private Property and State, The Origin of the Family, Marx's Capital were subject to frequent hunts. The first two books were seized by the Jail Superintendent and returned with comments, "Bad, very bad, No love, no adventure. It induces sleep".[146] The Consolidation had to run a secret apparatus for concealing books. It also published two papers - The Call in English and the Duniyar Khabar in Bengali, The Call dealt with a wide range of topics, e.g., the Russian Revolution, role of the petty bourgeoisie in revolution, history of the Chinese revolution etc. Gopal Acharya, Shib Verma and Bejoy Kumar Sinha were in charge of their publications. The other paper dealt

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145 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit.,pp.263,266-267.

146 Ibid., p. 269.

with news and articles on peasants and working-class movement in simpler language. These were obviously meant for the beginners.[147]

The Consolidation, soon after its formation, was greeted with hostility from other parties. So long there was a general kitchen for all; there was one library and there was a united house-committee. But soon after the formation of the Consolidation, the demand arose for division of all the committees, library and kitchen. As a result, the committees were split up and the kitchen was divided party-wise.[148] Let us now discuss the political development kitchen-wise.

IX

The Anushilan Kitchen

Satyendra Narayan Majumder reports that during his deportation to the Andamans, he was asked by his leaders to study scientific socialism and train up the cadres in that ideology. But entering the Cellular Jail, he saw that some of the members of his party had already joined the Consolidation; some were about to join it; while the majority were firmly opposed to the Consolidation.

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147 Ibid., p. 268.
Also interview with Gopal Acharya, Calcutta, May, 1981.

148 Nalini Das : op. cit., p. 154.

They strove hard to keep the party identity in tact. Majumder, as instructed by the leaders, took up the herculean task of educating the Anushilan cadres in scientific socialism. At first he did not know where to start from as most of the cadres had no elementary knowledge of social, political and economic development of the country. Moreover, most of them still cherished ideas of romantic revolutionism. However, he and his friends tided over the difficulties, even as the study board of the Consolidation had done a little earlier.[149]

Soon a demand arose among the Anushilan ranks to join the classes held by Dr. Narayan Roy. But the die-hards did not permit them as they feared that this might lead to the disintegration of the party. The leadership decided to bring out two hand-written papers - The Coming Struggle in English and/Bhabi Sangram in Bengali.The intention was to declare that the party had accepted socialism and yet maintained a separate identity against the Consolidation.[150]

Prabhat Chakraborty states that the Anushilan decided that after release of its members it would contact the Communist International for its recognition as a communist party and hoped that the Communist International would probably recognise two Communist Parties in India. Then why should they join the Consolidation?[151] But the doubts of the younger elements could

149 Satyendra Narayan Majumder:interview with the author.
150 Ibid.
151 Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the.author.

not be muted. They asked : if the party had accepted Marxism, then why should they remain outside the Consolidation? They refused to maintain a separate organisational identity.[152] The Consolidation too did not help them to come out of this difficult situation. Rather its organ, The Call, criticised the Anushilan as petty-bourgeois romantic. Had the Consolidation taken a liberal attitude towards the Anushilan prisoners who were fighting hard against the anti-communism of the dadas, their conversion to communism might have been easier and quicker.[153]

However, after the arrival of Sardar Gurmukh Singh in 1937, the Consolidation became much less sectarian. The Communists began to fraternise with others, jointly celebrated May Day and gave up their over-bearing attitude towards others. As a result of Singh's friendly intervention, a large number of the Anushilan prisoners joined the Consolidation.[154] This made the Anushilan leaders all the more bitter and hostile. Satyendra Narayan Majumder was denounced by Paresh Guha and Jiten Gupta as a spy of the communists. The relation inside the party was strained to the breaking point. Before July 1937, in a general meeting of the party in the Andamans the Anushilan was disbanded and its members were allowed to join the Consolidation individually. As a result,

152 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : op.cit., p. 272.
153 Satyendra Narayan Majumder : interview with the author.
154 Ibid.
Sardar Gurmukh Singh was sent to the Andamans being convicted in the First Lahore Conspiracy Case and after the amnesty he was repatriated to the main land. But during his transfer from one joil to other, he managed to escape and ultimately reached Mocow. He came back to India, was re-arrested and sent to the Cellular Jail in April, 1937.

with the exception of Paresh Guha, Jiten Gupta, Naren Ghosh, Radhaballav Gope, Bhola Karmakar and five others, the remaining thirty joined the Consolidation.[155]

X

The Jugantar Kitchen

As the urge for the study of scientific socialism spread among the younger elements in the Cellular Jail, the Jugantar leaders too reacted predictably and felt nervous. They tried their utmost to keep the party intact. The leaders apprehended that the virus of socialism might percolate through the general kitchen where free mixing with the communists was a common practice. The Jugantar leaders demanded a separate kitchen,and Prabir Goswami, who was then the manager of the general kitchen was asked by Rabi Neogi and Khoka Roy to resign. But Goswami declined.[156]

Sashin Chakraborty, a member of the Jugantar, states that the opposition to the formation of the Communist Consolidation came mainly from the dadas. Bhupal Bose, for example, was rabidly anti-communist. He prevented his followers from mixing with the communists and himself started taking study classes.But those who participated in his classes did not get proper intellectual nourishment from him.They were eager to familiarise themselves with Marxism.[157] Sunil Chatterjee,a middle cadre of the Party,started reading Marxism

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155 Paresh Guha : interview with the author,Calcutta, August, 1981.
156 Prabir Goswami : interview with the author.
157 Sashin Chakraborty : interview with author,Dum Dum, Calcutta, October, 1972.

in order to refute it better, but ultimately by reading Bukharin and Lenin's What is to be done and Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, he crossed over to communism and it so happened that he became one of the best teachers in the Cellular Jail.[158]

Besides Marxist literature, the personal behaviour of the communists was an important factor in this process of conversion. Sashin Chakraborty tells that even a bitter anti-communist could not resist the charm of Nalini Das for long. By his sweet reasonableness, Das succeeded in winning over a large number of prisoners to the communist camp.[159]

It is significant that in the process of conversion from revolutionary terrorism to communism physical assaults were relatively rare in the Andamans, compared to what happened in other camps and jails in the mainland. But these were not completely absent either. Sitangshu Datta Roy reports that because of his friendship with the communists, he was asked by his Jugantar colleagues, especially Probodh Roy, not to mix with the communists. Datta Roy protested against it. This enraged Probodh and his cohorts. One day during his afternoon walk, Datta Roy was suddenly struck by Probodh with a chappal. He, however, retaliated by breaking a pair of Probodh's teeth. The matter did not end there. Next day

158 Sunil Chatterjee's interview with Satyendra Narayan Majumder. See Majumder's book, p. 301.
159 Sashin Chakraborty : interview with the author.

while Datta Roy was sleeping, suddenly Sashin Chakraborty and few others started beating his head with iron rods. He bled profusely and fell senseless. He had five stitches on his head. On being asked by the Chief Commissioner to tell the names of his assailants, he declined to disclose the names.This revolutionary integrity created a deep impression on the assailants - Satyen Roy, Moni Sen, Joyesh Bhattacharya and a few others - who now atoned for their action by joining the Consolidation.[160] As for his own conversion, Datta Roy remembers that since 1931,his attraction to socialism had grown after going through Tagore's Russian Chitti (Letters from Russia); his conviction struck deeper roots in the Andamans as he pondered over the significance of the carters' strike in Calcutta,the great economic depression throughout the capitalist world, the Spanish Civil War and,lastly,the proletarian internationalism and martyrdom of the International Brigade in Spain.[161]

II

The Chittagong - Madaripur - B.V. Kitchen

According to an intelligence report,the first batch of Sri Sangha, B.V.and Chittagong prisoners who were sent to the Andamans in 1932 decided to work conjointly in the Jail.[162] But there were

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160 Sitangshu Datta Roy : interview with author.
161 Ibid.
162 D.I.G., I.B. Bengal File 1924 on the History Sheet of Ananta Singh.

some who opposed this move on ideological grounds and decided to quit. Ranadhir Das Gupta was one of the first who broke away from this group and announced his conversion to communism. To quote him :

" After this long incarceration, the question that tormented me was : what shall I do ? Shall I travel down the old way or try to explore a new path.? When I was in this depressed state of mind, Gopal Acharya gave me some books like Lenin by Mirsky, Life of Stalin, History of the Russian Revolution by Trotsky. I read them with rapt attention and attended the classes of Dr. Narayan Roy. I gradually came to the conclusion that the process of social evolution would inexorably lead to communism; then why should I remain a terrorist ?" [163]

The swing of the Chittagong prisoners towards communism was opposed by Ganesh Ghosh and others.The pro-communists were subjected to psychological pressure, were decried as renegades and were soon forced to change the cell.[164] As some of the Chittagong prisoners drew closer to the Consolidation,Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Lokenath Bal felt alarmed and tried to maintain the solidarity of their group. It was decided that Ganesh Ghosh would

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163 Ranadhir Das Gupta : interview with the author, Calcutta, May 1981.

164 Ibid.

take classes of like-minded prisoners; Ananta Singh would train them up in physical drill and signalling according to the semaphore method. It had some effects of course but only for a brief while.[165]

The Chittagong leaders were so enamoured of their own heroic exploits that only at a later date did the leading members of the Chittagong group accept communism, but even then, did not join the Consolidation. Subodh Roy, an ardent follower of Ganesh Ghosh, explains the delay by observing that they had no regards for the communists as they did not consider the communists as tested revolutionaries. They decided, "If we at all become communists, we shall follow our independent path."[166] However, with the passage of time and after reading progressive literature they themselves became interested in Marxism.Finally,it was the role of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War that converted them to communism. Returning to the jail in the mainland, they accepted Marxism in 1938.[167]

Madhu Banerjee of the B.V. recalls that his party leaders always kept strict vigilance on them, issued mandates directing them not to mix with or talk to the communists.To keep the party

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165 D.I.G.,I.B.Bengal File 1924 on the History Sheet of Ananta Singh.
166 Subodh Roy : interview with the author.
167 Ananta Singh : 'International Brigade'; Parichaya, Saradiya Sankhya, Calcutta,1353 B.S., p. 253.

intact they started taking classes on history, economics,politics etc. from the bourgeois standpoint. To counteract Leninism, they even started studying Marxist authors like Lapidus,Bukharin etc. The demand for these books was so high that they were rationed out. Sometimes,the sepoys helped them in the transfer of books from one cell to another.[168]

But Banerjee's conversion to socialism was not a smooth process. He had to pass through a period of acute mental agony. To quote him :

"The more I read, the more I felt like losing the ground under my feet. Lenin's What is to be done, Lapidus's Principles of Party Organisation convinced me that in our party there was no democracy. The leaders were dictators. Lapidus made me rapturous. I felt so much elated that I suddenly jumped from my chair,rushed out of the cell to run to the members of the Consolidation and say 'Take me in comrades, I, too, am a Communist'. But then my old ties held me back.The disapproving looks of my old dadas flashed before me, the martyrdom of my old friends haunted me - how am I to answer them ! My deep regards for the dadas,my deep emotional attachment to the comrades who felt by the wayside restrained me. Yet and yet, the irresistible appeal of the new ideology urged me on.Between them, I was almost torn to pieces.Walking through the restless nights,I could not decide what to do and which way to go.[169]

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168 Madhu Banerjee : interview with the author,Calcutta, July - August, 1981.

169 Ibid.

This kind of agony was the fate of almost all the prisoners. Some of the Madaripur - B.V. prisoners joined the Communist Consolidation while others, staunch believers in Hitler and Mussolini, remained anti-communist till the last day.

XII

The Communist Kitchen

Immediately after the formation of the Consolidation, an inner party struggle began in the communist camp over the principles of organisation. A section of the younger members headed by Gopal Acharya and Sachin Kar Gupta moved three resolutions in the general-body meeting : (1) No one should hold any class with any individual singly and separately. All would have to attend the general classes. (2) Every one should hand over his own cash to the common fund and that all necessary expenses of all the members would be met from that common fund. (3) The executive body would have the right to cancel the membership of a member if he did not abide by the rules of the party. Dr. Narayan Roy, Sunil Chatterjee and a few others objected to the first and second resolutions and threatened to resign if these resolutions were passed. At this, Gopal Acharya, Bangeswar Roy, Sachin Kar Gupta, Jagadananda Mukherjee, Bimal Das Gupta, Mukul Sen, Hare Krishna Konar, Rabi Neogi and four others submitted their resignation from the

executive committee and proposed to maintain a separate body. After a prolonged and heated discussion in the general body meeting, the first resolution was accepted. In the second resolution "compulsory accumulation of funds" was substituted by "voluntary accumulation". The third resolution was accepted in toto.[170]

. The Consolidation faced another crisis on the convict warder (C.W.) issue. According to Prabhat Chakraborty, the communists acted as C.W., for which they were paid and granted some facilities in jail. Gurmukh Singh, on his arrival in the Cellular Jail, objected to this and pressed for the discontinuation of this practice, as this practice was not consistent with self-respect. Those who opposed Gurmukh Singh's proposal were expelled but were later on taken back into the Consolidation after they had made the necessary self-criticism.[171]

These dissensions inside the Consolidation were duly noticed by the jail authorities. According to a government report, the progress of the Consolidation was hampered to some extent by internal quarrels and dissensions; but in spite of this, the number of members of the Consolidation rose to 137 by the middle of 1936 with a party committee of about 40 - mostly Bengalis. Its

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170 D.I.G., I.B.Bengal File 1923 on Niranjan Sengupta.
171 Prabhat Chakraborty : interview with the author.

principal activities were : dissemination of socialist ideas, popularisation of the United Front Policy and denunciation of imperialism, capitalism and fascism.[172]

XIII

In the process of transition from revolutionary terrorism to communism, Marxist literature played an important role in all the jails and camps. But how could these books be procured ? The theory popular even among the revolutionaries was that the authorities allowed Marxist books inside the jails to divert the militancy of the detenus along channels different from the twin evils of the Gandhian movement and revolutionary terrorism.[173] Jiten Ghosh in his memoirs held that the detenus were encouraged by the I.B.officers to read books on communism because they considered it to be a lesser evil and a better weapon to combat "terrorism".[174]

But this well-known theory does not cover all the known facts. It is of course true that the authorities allowed books and magazines after they were duly censored, but they were certainly not on communism alone. To quote a government report :

" ... books and magazines, both in English and in the vernaculars, may be allowed from outside sources, provided they

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172 Note on the Policy and Activities of the Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939; p.2.
173 Makhan Pal : interview with the author.
174 Jiten Ghosh : op.cit., p. 104.

are passed by the Commandant. It is desirable to encourage the use of suitable literature and, as far as practicable,facilities should be given for obtaining it. The cost of books, magazines and newspapers shall be met out of the detenus' monthly allowances."[175]

What kind of books were allowed ? The books allowed were of general nature, not having any direct bearing on Marxism. Makhan Pal gave a list of books he got in the Hijli Detention Camp in 1934 : R.C. Dutt's Economic History of India, Gadgil's Industrial Revolution in India, R.K. Datta's History of Trade Union Movement and Subrahmaniam's Agricultural Economy etc.[176] The detenus wanted something new and something more.But such books were forbidden fruits for the detenus. Talking of his personal experiences in the Midnapore Jail, in 1931,Gopal Acharya remembers that he could not get any book on Marxism; at last he got an idea of what communism was from an article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica.[177]

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175 Instructions for the treatment of persons detained in the Buxa Camp in the Alipur Duars, Jalpaiguri District, Bengal under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act 1930; B.G.Press, 1930, p. 4.

176 Makhan Pal : interview with the author.

177 Gopal Acharya : interview with the author,Calcutta, May,1981.

The controversy as to whether the authorities allowed Marxist literature in jails or not has been tentatively resolved by David M. Laushey. According to him, the government of Bengal had no definite policy in this matter. Generally there was selective censor about allowing Marxist literature inside jails.[178] But the interpretation and application of the general guidelines varied from jail to jail. Let us take some examples. Bejoy Modak got Marx's Capital without any difficulty in the Presidency Jail in 1930, as it was considered by the censor to be a book on mathematics.[179] Naren Sen states that Miss Mayo's Mother India was not allowed in the Rajshahi Jail (1933) by Luke, the jail superintendent, who regarded it as seditious.[180] It has already been stated how the Superintendent of the Cellular Jail despaired about the absence of love and adventure in Engels's Origin of the Family, Private Property and State and Anti-Duhring. All these seem to suggest that censoring of books largely depended on the cultural level of the officers concerned rather than on any hard and fast rules.

Unlike the Government of India, the Government of Bengal had no clear-cut policy to prevent the influx of communist literature inside the country. The Government of India issued a

178 David M. Laushey : Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left; p. 103.
179 Bejoy Modak : interview with the author.
180 Naren Sen : interview with the author.

notification in 1927 prohibiting import of any literature connected with the Communist International. But there were certain loopholes in that notification, through which such literature found its way into India. To overcome the difficulties, the Government of Bengal issued on 23 April 1928 an order under sec. 26(1) of the Post Office Act which empowered two senior police officers to impound any inland and foreign postal articles on suspicion. The measure was to some extent successful. The Government of India issued another notification dated 10 September 1932, under the Sea Customs Act which authorised the officers to confiscate any literature connected with the Communist International. If any such literature escaped the custom's net, it might be seized by Postal officers under sec. 25 of the Post Office Act and Sec. 99A of the Criminal Procedure Code.[181] But all these penal measures proved ineffective. A government report admitted that in 1934 alone, the total number of copies of newspapers and periodicals seized in transit was about 15,000. The dreaded literature continued to slip through the censor's net. Sometimes communist dailies were wrapped in one or two pages of The Times, the New York Herald Tribune etc.; Marxist books were wrapped in dust covers of popular novels or religious books. These were usually addressed to business firms or shops.[182]

181 India and Communism, pp. 296 - 298.

182 Ibid., p. 296.

The revolutionaries devised various means for getting Marxist literature in jails and camps. Laushey narrates how a detenu in the Presidency Jail got several pamphlets with the help of a Sikh warder.[183] Pramatha Gupta recounts that while he was in the Berhampore Detention Camp in 1932, he procured some Marxist books through the government contractors like 'Kamalalaya' of Dharmatala Street, Calcutta and 'Tara Stores' of Harrison Road, Calcutta. Detenus in the Deoli Detention Camp used to get all types of Marxist literature through a Delhi contractor, Sorabji Company, who used to supply food stuff to the Camp. Police and Jail warders, who were mainly Garwallis used to help them in this venture.[184]

The government was not unaware of the great significance of this swing of the detenus towards Marxism and were shrewd enough to observe that "every youth who forsakes terrorism for communism becomes a potential source of danger in the remote future", since he would poison the mind of the industrial and agricultural population.[185] The growing official determination to prevent Marxist literature from reaching the jails was frustrated in a curious manner. A large number of detenus were studying for B.A. and M.A. examinations of Calcutta University and the History and Economics papers dealt with the Soviet Union and other revolutionary

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183 David M. Laushey : op.cit., p. 104.
184 Pramatha Gupta : interview with the author.
185 Home (Pol) File 45/6/1936, N.A.I.

movements.[186] A sample survey of these question papers would give an idea of the nature of the questions set. For example, in the B.A. History Examination of 1935, the following question was set : 'Give an account of the scientific and intellectual development in Europe in the 19th century'.[187] Next year in the same examination and on the same subject, one of the questions asked was: 'Explain the panic caused by the rise of Socialism in the 19th century. What were the measures adopted to counteract its influence in the Church and State in England'?[188] In 1935, in the same subject in the M.A. Examination the following question was set : 'Critically discuss the socialistic experiments to remedy the evils of the Industrial Revolution in England during the first two decades after Waterloo'.[189] In 1936, candidates for the M.A. Examination in Economics were asked : 'How far is it true to say that the present structure of the Soviet government of Russia has been built on the ruins of the Tsarist regime' ?[190]

Commenting on these types of question, a high government official expressed helplessness:"these are obviously most unsuitable

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186 Home (Pol) File 43/37/1937, N.A.I.
187 Calcutta University Question Papers, 1935; Calcutta, 1940, p. 428.
188 Calcutta University Question Papers, 1936; Calcutta, 1941, p. 395.
189 Calcutta University Question Papers, 1935; Calcutta, 1944, p. 783.
190 Calcutta University Question Papers, 1936; Calcutta, 1941, p. 768.

for budding revolutionaries. But I confess that I shall see no solution of this problem."[191]

The problem no doubt worried the authorities. At last a policy of selective censorship was adopted :"Books on Socialism, Bolshevism and Communism should not be allowed to detenus except such (a) as have been prescribed by the University examinations, (b) or as have been written by authors whose names are an adequate guarantee of a balanced treatment."[192]

XIV

The above mentioned narrative tends to show that up to 1934-1935, the process of conversion to communism was somewhat tardy owing to sectarianism of the communists. But after the pronouncement of the United Front Policy by Dimitrov at the VII Congress in August 1935 and the publication of the Datta-Bradly Thesis,on the same lines (1936), the number of converts increased appreciably.[193] A considerable number of both the Anushilan and the Jugantar prisoners released in 1934-1938 became members of the C.P.I. The members of the Anushilan Revolt Group did likewise. The smaller groups wavered, but their younger members joined the C.P.I.[194] Though the majority of the B.V. and Sri Sangha were opposed to communism,

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191 Note by H.D.Craik,dt.16 December 1936; Home(Pol) File 43/37/1936, N.A.I.

192 Extracts from the Bengal Detention Manual,1937, B.G.Press, 1940, p. 13.

193 Notes on the Policy and Activities of Terrorist Parties in Bengal from 1937 to August 1939;p.13.

194 Ibid., p. 14.

a significant section of these groups opted for the C.P.I. These bands of dedicated and professional revolutionaries proved to be invaluable assets to the C.P.I. and quickened the tempo of its activities in the peasant, labour and student fronts. The number of members of the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation in May 1938 stood at 65,000.[195] (Also see Appendix No.F. for a list of ex-detenus who joined the C.P.I.; the list was prepared by the government in 1938.).

Now, why did a considerable number of the detenus (according to a government report, it was 25%) join the C.P.I. ? Some of the reasons, implicit in the above narrative, may be spelt out as follows :

(1) Firstly, of course, the revolutionaries were deeply moved by the successful armed uprising of the October Revolution; the Soviet Union's success in the war against imperialist intervention, and finally its progress during the First Five Year plan period (1928-1933). These were also the years which witnessed a mighty swing towards the left on a world scale.

(2) It was also the period when Anglo-Soviet contradiction was at its peak. Naturally, the strong anti-British feelings of the Bengal revolutionaries found their natural anchorage in the policy and practice of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was naturally regarded as their staunch international ally in the fight against British imperialism in India.

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195 Ibid., p. 16.

(3) Though the leftist movement in Bengal in the late 30s was divided, the C.P.I. was undoubtedly the major leftist party. It was no wonder, therefore, that the overwhelming majority of the converted and active detenus should flock to its banner.The C.P.I. cast a magic spell on them because of (a) its appeal of underground activities; (b) its all-India network of organisation; (c) its link with the Communist International; (d) its expanding bases among the students, peasants and workers and (e) its firm hold inside the Bengal Congress itself which might help them to penetrate the nationalist ranks.[196]

Above all else, the grand dream that the Communist International, of which they were now an integral part, would, before long, rouse and lead the wretched of the earth in the fight against exploitation and unite the human race in an expanding brotherhood, must have filled their hearts with a kind of revolutionary ecstasy they had not felt before. Pitting themselves against the onrush of history, the *dadas* fought desperately but in vain, and their defeat, for that very reason, lacked heroic qualities.

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196 These points were corroborated by more than half a dozen revolutionaries who became communists in jails and detention camps, *viz.*, Tushar Chatterjee, Bijoy Modak, Krishna Pada Chakraborty, Biren Banerjee and others.

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Chapter IX

GOVERNMENT POLICY AGAINST REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM IN BENGAL 1920 - 1937

It is common knowledge that the British government followed the policy of 'black and tan' to suppress revolutionary terrorism in India, especially in Bengal. But apart from this policy of dire and outright repression, the authorities also tried other methods, viz., control of the press, planting of agents inside revolutionary organisations, instigation of Hindu-Muslim riots, detention in camps and internment in remote places, control of educational institutions and finally attempts at diverting youthful energies into loyalist channels. In this chapter these different methods will be discussed briefly.

I

Thanks to the free use of Regulation III of 1818 and the Defence of India Act, the revolutionary movement suffered a setback after the failure of the Indo-German plots of 1916. But after the gradual release of revolutionaries by the Amnesty Declaration of 1919 and national resurgence during the Non-Cooperation movement of 1920 - '22, the revolutionary activities regained old proportions. By September 1923, prospect of fresh outbreaks loomed large; the only effective weapons in the government armoury were the ordinary laws and Regulation III,

which proved inadequate to deal with the problem. The government now armed itself with an Ordinance in October 1924, which was replaced by the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925. The authorities used it at random arresting 187 persons; the last arrests were made in 1927. These measures had the desired effect: between 1924 and 1928, there were only one murder and 16 major or minor outrages.[1]

At an official conference held under the chairmanship of the Viceroy in December 1926, it was decided that the risk of releasing the revolutionaries and keeping them under watch was worth taking. By March 1927, they began to be gradually released and by January 1929, all were set free.[2] The government did not realise the magnitude of the risk taken thereby. A considerable number of the released prisoners rejoined the secret organisations and by the middle of 1928, the younger elements amalgamated themselves with an aim to commit violence. In 1929, terrorist attacks occurred throughout Bengal. The I.G. Police had information that the revolutionaries had been recruiting new members and organising themselves with minute thoroughness for armed insurection.[3]

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[1] Report on the Police Administration in the Bengal Presidency for theyear 1931, Part VII, B.G.Press, 1932, pp. 27, 28.

[2] Ibid., p. 28. Also Home (Pol) File 4/41/1932, N.A.I.

[3] Home (Pol) File 4/41/1932, N.A.I.

In April 1930 just after the expiry of the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Chittagong Armoury Raid took place. There was no special power at the disposal of the authorities except Regulation III to deal with the explosive situation. So the B.C.L.A. Act was re-promulgated as an ordinance on the next day of the raid and on 16 October 1930, it was made into a law as the B.C.L.A. Act of 1930. From April 1930 - 1931, 991 persons were arrested under this Act of whom 818 were interned and 173 released.[4]

By 1931 the revolutionaries, inspired by the success of the Chittagong uprising, had extended their organisations among the Hindu bhadrolok who had been roused by the nationalist press and congress propaganda. To counter this menace, the government asked for more special power. So in 29 October 1931, the Bengal Ordinance (IX of 1931) was promulgated. A month later it was followed by the Bengal Emergency Power Ordinance (XI of 1931), Chapter I of which was extended to Chittagong alone; but Chapter II, which provided for "Special Tribunals and Special Magistrates and a procedure designed to overcome delaying tactics" was extended to the whole of Bengal.[5] The goverrment enacted several other laws - the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act, 1932, the Bengal Criminal Law (Arms and Explosives) Act, 1932 and the Bengal

4 Report on the Police Administration in the Bengal Presidency for the year 1931, Part VII, p. 28.
5 Home (Pol) File 4/41/1932, N.A.I.

Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1934 etc. All these Acts, together with other coercive methods like the introduction of the identity card, system of imposition of collective fines, prohibition of cycling, etc., have already been discussed at some length at appropriate places in the previous chapters.

The diehard section of officials, however, pressed for more ruthless remedy to cure the disease of terrorism. It was all praise for the methods adopted by the Free State Government of Ireland which promulgated a Public Safety Act, October 1931. The Act permitted secret trial, infliction of unrestricted penalties including flogging and death. The diehard section wanted for Bengal an Act on the Irish line. In a note R.E.A., Ray, I.G., C.I.D. wrote on 29 October 1931 :

"The Irish Free State Government is composed of persons who themselves were terrorists and presumably know the best method of dealing with terrorism. During Rebellion hostages were shot in retaliation for outrage. We have a hostage at Buxa."[6]

Ray was obviously referring to Dinesh Gupta of the Writers' Buildings' Shotting Case who was then detained at Buxa. This only shows how far the lunatic fringe of the bureaucracy was willing to go.

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6 Home (Pol) File 345/1931, W.B.S.A.

The government felt uneasy about the growing participation of women in the movement. To deal with this new situation, instructions were given to the circles concerned to make a list of officers whose wives or wards were joining the movement and transfer them to the remote areas forthwith.[7] A section of officers, however, suggested that the Whipping Act, which was already in use in Bombay City under the name Bombay Act X of 1933, be extended to crimes of violence.[8] W.D.R. Prentice, Home Member, was not in favour of it as it would breed further terrorism. He reminded his colleagues of the case of Kingsford who had sentenced a young boy to whipping during the great anti-partition agitation.[9] J.N. Roy, Additional Secretary, too opposed it, as it would only prove to be the "best means of encouraging terrorism."[10] The idea was finally dropped as top-ranking officials did not approve of this measure.

II

Within a short period of the expiry of the Press Act in 1922, a series of newspapers like the Narayan, the Sankha, the Bijoli, the Atmasakti, the Sarathi, the Prabasi, the Tarun, the Prabartak, etc. began to publish articles relating to the experiences of old revolutionaries "having a direct or indirect

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7. Home (Pol) File 599/1931, Sl. 1-14, W.B.S.A.
8. Home (Pol) File 861/1933, W.B.S.A.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

tendency to excite hostility against the government and the British."[11] The government could not take any step as it had been warned by legal experts that prosecution would, on legal grounds, fail. So it gave the press a long rope so that it might be tempted to commit culpable offence. But the Indian press skilfully evaded the official noose and succeeded in creating an impression that the government could not touch it. As a result, subversive movement met with open or tacit approval of a large sections of the people.[12] But as the government realised the serious proportions which the press campaign had assumed, it passed the Press Ordinance (27 April 1931) which brought the press under official control[13] and heavy securities were demanded from them. More than Rs.2,40,000 was realised from 131 papers; nine newspapers declined to pay and ceased publication[14]. But the glorification of political assassins and encouragement of the "cult of terrorism" continued unabated in the Bengali press, though in a somewhat disguised and ambiguous manner. The danger was too great to be overlooked and so the government passed a far more draconic law, the Indian Press Emergency Powers Act, on 9 October 1931.[15]

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11 Terrorism in India 1917-1936, p. 15.
12 Memorandum on the history of terrorism in Bengal, 1905-1933, p. 22.
13 Subhas Chandra Bose, The Indian Struggle, p. 183.
14 R.C. Majumdar : History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III, p. 342.
15 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1930-31, Calcutta, 1932, p. XIX.

The government, in spite of such coercive methods, however, failed to gag the press. The prescription under Sec 99A, Criminal Procedure Code proved ineffective, "as care is taken to get literature which is likely to be proscribed distributed before the authorities can get it proscribed and seized. The proscription is always too late to be of any use."[16] So a proposal was made by a top-ranking officer that the government of India be moved for an effective Press Act which would also make publication of proscribed literature an offence[17].

A proposal was mooted by B.R.Sen, Deputy Secretary to the Home Department, to cultivate two leading dailies, viz., the Forward and the Amrita Bazar Patrika, and to use them against the revolutionaries. He claimed that he had been approached by these two dailies asking him to open columns against "terrorist ideas"; naturally he pleaded for cancelling the orders of security in case of the Amrita Bazar Patrika and for placing both of them in the approved list on the definite understanding that they would plead for movement through constitutional means and discouraging all forms of "unconstitutional and subversive activities."[18] But B.R. Sen suggested that neither of the papers would be expected to give up their general critical and anti-government tenor, for any such change would make them suspect in the eyes of the public.[19]

16 Measures to deal with Terrorism, p. 2.
17 Ibid., p. 4.
18 Home (Pol) File 768/1933, W.B.S.A.
19 Ibid.

Sen asked for a sanction of Rs.1,500 per month (a) to arrange for publication of articles, interviews, letters of private persons in newspapers and magazines, (b) to give secret subsidy to papers which were found useful, even if temporarily, (c) to award prizes for anti-terrorist essays in schools and colleges; and (d) to secure services from journalists or writers in this venture.[20]

As to the concessions proposed to be given to the Forward and the Amrita Bazar Patrika, W.D.R. Prentice had no objection, but he demanded "performance first and grant of concessions later." But he was definitely against the idea of putting these papers on the approved list as it would bring the government into "disrepute".[21] However, from 1933 onward Press Officers to the government maintained personal contact with the editors and to some extent influenced the reportings of some of the papers in regard to controversial matters and matters likely to create hatred against the government.[22] How far the government succeeded in buying up a section of nationalist press cannot be definitely stated, but the persons who had lived through those days still remember the role of one of the nationalist papers which earned nothing but public opprobrium for some of its leading editorials.[23]

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Home (Pol) File 808/1935, Sl. 1-16, Home(Pol) Dept., West Bengal Secretariat.
23 Chinmohon Sehanavis; interview with the author.

III

One of the major means of fighting revolutionary movement in Bengal during the period under review was the system of recruiting secret agents from the ranks of the revolutionaries themselves. This entailed the employment of agents who were or had been themselves revolutionaries.[24] There are dozens of instances to show how such agents helped the authorities in ferretting out the revolutionaries. A government report admitted unhesitatingly that in 1917 the local authorities had enlisted a leader of Dacca Anushilan as their agent with whose assistance they succeeded in apprehending a number of absconders.[25]

Bhupen Datta specially named one Mihir Ghosh, a renegade who helped the government in tracing and arresting the revolutionaries during 1923-24.[26] Hari Narayan Chandra, leader of the New Violence Party accused Sisir Ghosh of being an agent planted by the police inside the revolutionary movement. He was a Central I.B. man during the Great War and was loaned by the Bengal I.B. during 1923 to unearth the revolutionary activities. Sisir Ghosh, posing himself as a revolutionary, promised the Bengal revolutionaries to get them arms from the western frontier. With

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24 Home (Pol) File 4/25/1932, N.A.I.

25 There is no file No.,but the heading of the file is "A secret confidential note by additional Secretary, I.B.,Calcutta,8th January,1918". Home(Pol) Dept.,W. Bengal Secretariat.

26 Bhupendra Kumar Dutta : Biplaber Padachinna; p. 155 - (Mihir is not the real name of that renagade.Datta has slightly changed his name;he was Sisir.

financial assistance from the police, he opened a Khaddar shop at Mirzapur Street, Calcutta, where the revolutionaries usually met. When he was exposed, his shop was bombed by Basanta Denki and Santi Chakrabórty. He escaped but his I.B. assistant Prakash Banik was killed by bomb splinters.[27]

In the Alipore Bomb Case in 1923, Nitya Gopal Datta turned a police agent and in a statement he mentioned the names of Santosh Mitra and others who participated in dacoities and murders in and around Calcutta. His confession became so much helpful to the authorities that Charles Tegart had to admit that it was of immense importance to the police.[28]

In the Dakshineswar Bomb Case (1925-26), a co-prisoner turned a police spy and confessed everything to the police regarding the plans of the revolutionaries, the place where bombs were stored, who were the masterminds behind the preparation of bombs and how the revolutionaries established links with Burma, etc. The I.B. file does not mention the name of this agent but uses a code number 505 to denote him. The agent, however, confessed that he was known in the revolutionary circles by his code name - Kabi alias Prafulla alias Utpal alias Chand alias Nirode Kanti Roy. On being interviewed by the author, Biren Banerjee, co-accused in the same

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27 Harinarayan Chandra : Biplabir Sadhana, pp. 90-91.
Also Home (Pol) File 4/1/1925, N.A.I.
28 D.I.G.,I.B. Bengal File 1923 on Alipore Bomb Case.

case, immediately recalled his name. He was Sudhargshu Chaudhuri of Hooghly.[29] The nature of information he supplied to the police and series of code names used by him only indicate that he was an important member of the party.

The author has no intention of disparaging the revolutionaries. But it must be admitted in the interest of history that Fakir Sen, one of the participants in the Chittagong Uprising, confessed and identified his friends in an identification parade in jail "with a borkha on".[30] The graph used in Appendix No.D would show to what extent the number of agents increased during the declining phase of the movement in the Chittagong district.

The arrest of Ganesh Ghosh and other absconders in Gondal-para, Chandernagore, would not have been possible but for a betrayal. Prafulla Gupta alias Sanu, of the Barisal Jugantar said that it was Kalipada Ghosh of Khulna, a detenu in Howrah Jail, who showed Charles Tegart the Chandernagore haunt. The shelter was arranged by Bhupen Datta and as Kalipada was close to him, he knew it. The authorities amply rewarded him for his treachery; he was sent to England for higher studies.[31] This piece of information was also corroborated by Manoranjan Gupta, a Jugantar leader.[32]

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29 D.I.G., I.B.Bengal File, 1925 on Biren Banerjee.
Also author's interview with Biren Banerjee.
30 Home (Pol) File 243/1930, part VI, W.B.S.A.
31 Prafulla Gupta : interview with the author.
32 Manoranjan Gupta : interview with Chinmohon Sehanavis, Calcutta, December, 1975.

Sitangshu Datta Roy states that he could have avoided arrest in the Graham Murder Case (1934) if one of his associates had not betrayed him to the police.[33] He, however, refused to mention the name of that 'revolutionary' agent. If any one studies carefully the proceedings of the different trials of the "terrorist" conspiracies, one would find that in numerous cases, there were so many 'Naren Goswamis' who either made confessions to the police or turned approvers.

IV

The tested weapon of communal riots was also used from time to time to disrupt the revolutionary movement. Official links with the communal elements of Muslim leadership enabled the authorities to engineer riots as and when necessary. Though they themselves did not at any time, during our period, initiate riots, the revolutionaries were, however, drawn into them, being propelled by their own deeply held Hindu religious beliefs and by their sense of duty to the Hindu community to which they belonged. These involvements were a measure of ideological confusion of which the authorities deliberately took advantage. During communal riots, the Hindu bhadrolok looked to the "terrorists" as their armed fists, tc counter their communal rivals. Such was the case during

33 Sitangshu Datta Roy : interview with author.

the riots in Chittagong in 1931 to which we have referred and during the riots in Dacca in the same year. The policy of divide and rule paid good dividends for a while to the ruling community.

V

In the early 1930s, the Government of Bengal decided after much serious deliberation to send "dangerous" persons to detention camps in and outside Bengal. W.D.R. Prentice, Home Member, in a note divided the detenus into three categories and made the following prescriptions :

(a) "the dangerous and confirmed terrorists, to be kept in a detention camp outside Bengal in complete isolation, under strict discipline and conditions similar to rigorous imprisonment";

(b) "a middle class of confirmed but less dangerous terrorists, to be kept at Buxa under strict discipline and under conditions similar to rigorous imprisonment";

(c) "younger and less dangerous persons, including recent recruits to terrorism, to be kept in detention camp run on reformatory lines." 34

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34 Measures to deal with Terrorism, p. 3.

The Government of India agreed to open a camp at Deoli in Rajasthan for 100 detenus in April 1932 and decided to extend it so as to accommodate 400 more detenus by early 1933.[35] In 1932, the Government of India decided to deport to the Andamans 58 political convicts and in 1933 another batch of 90 prisoners was sent there.[36] The object of sending detenus to remote places was to prevent them from forming in Bengal nucleus of plots and conspiracies and reduce the chances of their escape and thereby diminish the danger to the security of Bengal.[37]

This policy of deporting detenus to far-off places created a public furore and there was a sharp criticism of this practice in the press and from the platform. An Andaman Relief League was formed in Calcutta which demanded repatriation of the detenus to the mainland.

A statement showing the number of persons dealt with under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1930 and Regulation III of 1818 shows that the total number of persons in village domicile had risen from 838 at the close of 1935 to 912 at the end of 1936 while the number of prisoners in jails and camps had fallen from 1,498 to 1,259 during the same period. From the same source[38] we learn that the number of detenus in internment camps and

35 Report on the Administration of Bengal,1931-32,Calcutta, 1933, p. XIX .
36 Report on the Administration of Bengal,1932-33, p.XXII. Also The Indian Annual Register,January-June,Vol.I, Calcutta, 1934, pp. 496 - 497.
37 The Indian Annual Register,January-June,Vol.I,1934,pp.496-497.
38 Fortnightly Reports on the political situation in Bengal, July-December, 1936; B.G.Press, 1937, p. 4. .

jails inside Bengal and outside was as follows :

(1) Berhampore, old	- 284	442
(2) new	- 158	
(3) Deoli	-	452
(4) Hijli	-	304
(5) In jails outside Bengal		3

VI

A government survey reveals the interesting fact that from 1915 to 1933, most of the detenus and political convicts were school students at the time of their recruitment and also at the time of their arrest. A sample survey in Dacca town in 1931 showed that not more than two per cent of the students were pro-government.[39] The question how to stamp out terrorist influence and infiltration in the educational institutions was indeed a headache for the government.

The government thought of organising public opinion, particularly of the Hindu community, against the revolutionary movement.The Chief Secretary of Bengal in a letter to all the commissioners solicited their opinion as to what measures they would like to adopt in this regard.[40] The Commissioners of Chittagong Division, Presidency Division and Dacca Division held that mere passing of anti-terrorist resolutions would be of little use:"it would mean sheer waste of efforts".[41] Hands,the magistrate of

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39 Home (Pol) file 45/1/1933, N.A.I.
40 Home (Pol) file 1083/1932 Sl. 1-8, Home(Pol),Dept., W. Bengal Secretariat.
41 Ibid.

Chittagong, however, laid stress on mobilising all non-official gentlemen of the locality and impressing upon them the need to support government. The Commissioner of Dacca, on the other hand, insisted on action which would create an impression that the government was strong enough to "protect and reward its friends and attack its enemies."[42]

The Commissioner of the Rajsahi Division advocated, after consultation with the district officers of the Division, the idea of getting resolutions passed at public meetings against the "terrorists". This district officer, however, suggested that propaganda must be directed at school level as well because "it is more important to convert the sons than the fathers"[43]. The district officer of Pabna suggested that men held in public esteem be invited to deliver lectures in schools and colleges giving " a historical restrospect as how terrorism failed in Europe and other civilised countries in the past." He strssed the importance of film shows on the life and teachings of Christ, Buddha, SriChaitanya and other great saints.[44]

A more concrete proposal was put forward by the Police Commissioner of Calcutta. He held that the best method of curbing

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42 Commissioner, Dacca Division to Chief Secy., Bengal, dt. 29 December 1931 : Ibid., Sl. 5.

43 Commissioner, Rajsahi Division to Chief Secy., dt. 8 January 1932 : Ibid., Sl. 6.

44 Ibid.

terrorism was to make a detailed study of the "terrorist propaganda" in all its phases, particularly its literature and then to arrange a series of lectures, publish pamphlets and articles in newspapers etc. to demolish the "ideology of the terrorist". If this was done, at least the majority of the students would be rendered immune to "terrorist propaganda".[45] He also insisted on inclusion of lectures in the curricula of schools and colleges and suggested that such lectures would have to be prepared under the auspices of the university and government authority and that their delivery must be made compulsory. These materials could be used extensively in the press of Great Britain because "Hindu politicians have always been very sensitive to the public opinion of foreign countries".[46]

The Commissioner of Burdwan Division having consulted the district officers opined that the press and public meetings must be sternly controlled and a firm policy must be chalked out with regard to schools and teachers and that the power to grant aids should be exercised with severity. In order to "restore public confidence in the administration and thereby remove the poisonous atmosphere in which terrorism flourishes", he urged the necessity of convincing

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45 Commissioner of Police, Calcutta to Chief Secy. dt. 16 February 1932; Ibid., Sl. 7.

46 Ibid.

the rural population that the government wanted their welfare too. To this end, 4,300 village schools should be given grant of Rs.300 each.This might initially involve a heavy expenditure but in the long run the government would easily win over a large section of the rural people, who, though they had not participated in "terrorist crimes" had certainly joined the Civil Disobedience movement. He was also in full agreement with his officers who asked for film shows as he was convinced that the money thus spent would yield rich dividends. He also pleaded for the confiscation of properties of families whose members were involved in "terrorist crimes".[47]

A strange and somewhat ridiculous proposal was put forward by one particular officer, D.N.Sen, S.D.O., Midnapore, who coined new slogans :

(a) Naba Sasan Trantra Ki Jai (Victory to the New Constitution);

(b) Samrat Ki jai (Victory to the Emperor);

(c) Biplab Dhansha Hauk (Down with Revolution);

(d) Dhik Biplabkari (Shame to the Revolutionaries).

Sen suggested that in order to have these slogans shouted in the streets, a party must be formed against the Congress. Pending the

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47 Ibid. Appendix.

formation of such a party, the government officers themselves could take out processions, though the processionists might run the risk of being ridiculed. He also suggested a modification of the tune of Bandemataram which should be converted into European notation so that it could be played during marches by the police.[48] Nothing, however, is known about the fate of these above proposals. But Anderson, the Governor of Bengal, was definitely of the opinion that official counter-propaganda must be on political lines based on widely chosen facts, avoiding details of the mischief done by the revolutionaries, and some use must be made of figures illustrating the burden thrown on the community by such "criminal" activities.[49]

From 1933 onwards, according to the decisions arrived at a joint meeting (31 October 1933) of the Education and Political departments, the government tightened control over the educational institutions. Teachers were asked to explain why their students were concerned with political activities. In case of aided schools, the managing committees were directed to keep watch on students and teachers. The University was authorised to disaffiliate unaided schools whose students or teachers were involved in any anti-government activities. It was further agreed at the joint

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48 Notes on conference held at DM's Quarters, Midnapore, 5 December 1931; Ibid.

49 Ibid.

meeting that the Education Department would have a series of lectures prepared by one Barindra Kumar Ghosh.[50] Some books included in the curricula were to describe the benefits of British rule. The government also organised magic lantern lectures narrating the achievements of the government. Publication of school and college magazines containing tactfully written articles against "terrorism" was encouraged. It was suggested by the government, at one time, to utilise the services ofDr.S.N. Das Gupta, Principal of Sanskrit College, in mobilising the Pandits against "terrorism". But this idea was dropped as the Pandits themselves had very "little influence among the class of students who ordinarily come under the influence of such movement."[51]

Along with the policy of spreading anti-terrorist ideas among the public in general and students in particular through film shows, lectures, pamphlets, processions etc., the government also set up village committees and committees of guardians. The teachers were asked to keep a watchful eye on their students outside the school hours and to act in co-operation with the parents so that they might not keep company with "undesirable" elements. This line of action was followed in many districts,notably in Chittagong, Mymensingh, Dacca, Midnapore, Tripura and Barisal.[52] Arrangements

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50 Barindra Kumar Ghosh is perhaps no other than the famous ex-revolutionary. It is he who was persuaded by the government to publish Sir N.N.Sarkar,Advocate General's speech against terrorism.This information that Barin was the publisher of the book was made available to the author by Nayan Ranjan Das Gupta, an important revolutionary of that period.
Home (Pol) file 899/1933, Home(Pol) Dept.W.Bengal Secretariat.

51 Ibid.

52 Home(Pol) file 808/1933,Sl.1-16,Home(Pol) Dept.,W.Bengal Secretariat.

were also made for holding mass meetings in districts affected by "terrorism". In those meetings, non-officials like lawyers who had earlier defended the revolutionaries in courts of law, persons whose sons or brothers or relatives were in detention camps, and men of public importance spoke against the futility of the "terrorist movement."[53]

To divert the "surplus energy" of the Bengali boys, extra-curricular activities like dramatic performances, debates and games and sports were sponsored or encouraged by the government. Much emphasis was laid on the Boy Scouts movement, Civil Guide movement. Bratachari and programme of rural reconstruction. In 1935-36, the government of India sanctioned 16 lakhs of rupees for rural reconstruction. Out of this fund, Rs.1,26,000 was allotted for making playgrounds for 87 villages in Bengal and for starting 180 boys' schools and 97 girls' schools; village libraries were established with financial help from the government of India. Inter-school sports were also organised in many places.[54]

The Bratachari movement, initiated by Gurusaday Datta, a Bengali member of the I.C.S., served the official purpose so admirably that the government admitted : "... this movement must act as a powerful influence in opposing the growth of undesirable

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53 Ibid.
54 Report on the Administration of Bengal,1935-36, Calcutta, 1937, p. viii.

subversive movement ... it must immunise their minds against poisonous influences".[55] An official note of the Home (Political) Department stated in the same vein : "Bratachari principles should be utilised as one of the methods of diverting attention of young men and women from the evils of terrorism."[56]

To this end, the government opened innumerable Bratachari camps in almost all the districts, some of which were inaugurated by high officials. At some of the inaugural ceremonies, ministers (like Khwaja Nazimuddin, minister in charge of Education) were present.[57] One thing seems clear that Gurusaday knew what he was doing and what was expected of him by the authorities. The concluding para of his book on "Bratachari speaks explicitly that if the movement was guided and handled sympathetically by the district and sub-divisional officers then "it will help them considerably in controlling and influencing the entire student community in Bengal..."[58] The Bratachari so suited the interest of the authorities that as late as 1938, R.H. Hutchins, Joint Secretary (Home), Bengal, suggested that in the campaign for "better Bengal" unemployed youths might be absorbed into useful activities and government should raise "something on the lines of labour battalions". His suggestion was to entrust the organisation of

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55 Note on Bratachari Movement, B.G.Press, 1934-35, pp.1-2; Also Home (Pol) file 877/1933, Home(Pol) Dept., W. Bengal Secretariat.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 G.S.Datta : Note on the Bratachari System of Citizenship Training, Calcutta, 1933-34, p. 9.

such units to Gurusaday Datta with direct financial aid from the government.[59]

VII

All the aforesaid measures were surely palliatives, hardly able to cure, far less prevent, the disease. So a more farsighted section of the bureaucracy tried to go deeper into the problem and came to the conclusion that unless the heavy burden of economic depression was removed and the large-scale unemployment problem among the middle-class Hindus was solved, "terrorism" could never be chcked.[60] Detention without trial would not solve the problem. Something constructive must be done to make the "terrorists" "useful members of the society" and to give them a chance of turning their energies and other abilities into useful channels.[61] Merely to set them free without a definite policy of reforming them would mean to push them again to the "dangerous path of terrorism". The government decided to train up selected bands of released detenus at its own cost in agriculture, fruit-farming, kitchen gardening and the like "in which there is scope for the intelligence and organising power of the bhadrolok youth" - a task which

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59 Home (Pol) file 493/1939. Home (Pol) Dept.,W.Bengal Secretariat.

60 Home (Pol) file 1083/1932 (S1-8),Home Dept.,W.Bengal Secretariat.

61 Speeches delivered by His Excellency,the Right Honourable Sir John Anderson, P.C.G.C.B.,G.C.,I.E. Governor of Bengal during 1935-36; 1936-37, p. 112. P.S.Press.

had hitherto been neglected.[62]

The government published a brochure entitled Opportunities for an Industrial Career for Youth Men in Bengal which described in detail the facilities that had been made available for technical and industrial training in Bengal. In certain places, centres for industrial and technical institutions were opened and state scholarship was introduced.[63]

In 1932-33, the government sanctioned the 'Unemployment Relief Scheme' with the object of promoting industrial occupation among the middle class. In pursuance of this scheme, 28 demonstration parties (four parties in each of the seven industries selected viz., weaving, soap making, umbrella making, brass and bell-metal work, leather goods, cutlery and potteries) were organised. The Bengal State Aid to Industries Act, which was put into operation during 1932-33, was also another measure intended "to foster small and cottage industries and expected indirectly to assist in the solution of the problem of middle class unemployment."[64]

In 1935-36, the government started two industrial training camps, each camp providing training to 30 detenus.[65] In 1934-35, 500 bighas of land were acquired in 24 Parganas for opening an

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62 Ibid.
63 Home (Pol) file 805/1935 (Sl.1-16), Home (Pol) Dept., W. Bengal Secretariat.
64 Ibid.
65 Fortnightly Reports on the Political situation in Bengal, January to June, 1936; P.G.Press, 1936, p.40.

agricultural training centre for 25 persons at a time.[66] In 1936, the number of trainees in these three camps was 74, of whom 20 came from detention camps and 54 from village domicile.[67] According to another government report, by the end of 1936, 59 detenus who had passed out of the first two industrial camps had started business with financial aid from the government. It was expected that by January 1937, 80 more detenus would be released after completion of their training period. The government assured all of them financial aid to start industries for which they received training.[68]

The government also amended the Police Regulations of Bengal, 1932, permitting Bengali boys to enter the police service including warder staff in Jail. But this experiment hardly fulfilled official expectations.[69]

VIII

From the above discussion, it would appear that the official policy towards revolutionary terrorism during the period under review was one of kicks and kisses of coercive legislations

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66 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1934-35, Calcutta, 1936, p. XXIV.

67 Fortnightly Reports on the political situation in Bengal, p. 40.

68 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1935-36, Calcutta, 1937, pp. viii-ix.

69 Home (Pol) file 808/1935. Home (Pol) Dept., W. Bengal Secretariat.

backed by tentative gestures of paternalism. The revolutionary movement in Bengal drew to a close by 1936-37 not primarily because of the official policy of dire repression or tepid reform, but basically because more effective forms of struggle against the Raj had already appeared in full view, rendering the cult of revolutionary terrorism obsolete.

CONCLUSIONS

The present survey of the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal during its final phase, which incidentally was also the most heroic, now draws to an end. This movement which formally began in the early years of this century when British rule in India under Lord Curzon had reached the zenith of its power, entered its twilight by the mid - 30s. Thus, measured by the time-span, it was the briefest of all movements that convulsed Bengal in the modern period. Yet it remains an inspiring mythology of the country's struggle for freedom for reasons extensively noted in the foregoing chapters.

Its brief existence and its great emotive appeal cannot, however, obscure the complexity of its character. This complexity is mirrored in the diversity of names by which participants and scholars alike have tried to characterise it over the years. Since no designation has yet been generally accepted, the embers of the controversy refuse to die down.

The diehard official practice of calling it a terrorist movement - pure and simple - is admittedly wrong for more reasons than one. For one thing, the participants of the movement were no gangs of common criminals; they were bands of young radicals who were inspired by one of the noblest of human urges - the urge to free their country from foreign thraldom. They were

moved by the same robust spirit of nationalism that had earlier quickened the birth of the modern period in world history. For another, official pronouncements too did not always match official practice. Rather, they diverged more and more with the progress of the movement.

The seemingly inflexible official policy of decrying the participants as mere terrorists had to yield ground steadily under the mounting pressure of public opinion. The so-called terrorists had to be granted, though by degrees, the status of political prisoners since the early 20s. The detenus and internees in camps and in the countryside were provided with even greater amenities, including grant of monthly allowances. Political literature of the most radical variety was supplied to the prisoners, of course after being duly censored and passed. Strings of ordinances were promulgated and series of special tribunals were set up to deal with this special category of prisoners. Even projects of their economic rehabilitation after their release were drawn up, so that unemployment and hunger, the two eternal drill-sergeants of popular revolts, might not drive them once again to the path of political extremism.

Thus, the official policy of calling them terrorists and the official practice of treating them, more and more, as political prisoners, revealed a curious dichotomy in attitude at the

apex of power. The author has tried to explain this dichotomy at some length in course of this study, since it has not yet received the attention it deserves.

By branding them as terrorists, the authorities no doubt expressed both their contempt and their fear for their major political adversaries. It was also an inadvertent confession on their part that these adversaries did indeed succeed in terrorising the bureaucracy on a scale not generally known, especially in those areas where this movement reached its sunlit summit. Ample evidence has been adduced in the text to indicate the extent of terror that prevailed at different levels of the administration. To cite one more instance. Even Charles Tegart, for years a principal target of the revolutionaries and who seemed to enjoy a charmed life, was perhaps not immune to this prevailing feeling of fear. The news of his retirement from service and his departure from India was kept a closely guarded secret for weeks lest the revolutionaries might make one more attempt on his life at the last moment. The news of his departure was made public only when his ship was cutting across the distant waters of the Mediterranean.[1] Was it not a grudging recognition of the striking power of the antagonists ? It also stands to reason that by calling them terrorists, the administration unwittingly paid them a left-handed compliment.

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1 Subodh Chandra Sengupta : op.cit., pp. 82 - 83.

In certain official documents, the so-called terrorists have some times been described as anarchists as well.[2] This description is even more inaccurate. While the anarchists advocate the establishment of a stateless society here and now as a means of abolishing all forms of exploitation of man by man, our heroes fought for the establishment of a free Indian state. Both, however, subscribe to the view that where order is injustice, disorder is the beginning of justice.

In the late 20s, a new term-terro-communists - began to make furtive appearance in the official documents, adding a new dimension to the controversy. This hyphenated word, obviously the concoction of some clever bureaucrat, was used to denote those elements, who while talking of communism, persisted in terrorist practice, i.e., who were communists in words but terrorists in deeds. Since this new phenomenon - terro-communism - marked a very significant transitional phase in the movement, it has been elaborately discussed in this study. But neither the coinage of this new hybrid word nor its description helps us to conclude the debate. Firstly, the terro-communist trend is not co-extensive with our entire period. It made its appearance only at a later date and that too not as the decisive trend. Secondly, as a definition, it is riddled with a fatal contradiction. Ideologically, doctrinally and practically, terrorism and communism are so poles apart that one cannot be a terrorist and a communist at the same time. The mongrel word - terro-communists- by combining the two only tried to fit a square peg in a round hole.

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2 Home (Pol) File 136/1932, W.B.S.A.

The participants, on the other hand, preferred to proclaim themselves as revolutionaries.This description, though more appropriate, is not entirely free from the difficulties of a debate. By trying to liberate the country from foreign yoke, not by peaceful constitutional means but by violent methods, they had surely won their spurs and the right to be regarded as revolutionaries. In the 20s, they announced in their publications that the Irish path of revolt was their model and to traverse that path was their manifest destiny. But these alone do not make a movement revolutionary. Any movement, in order to be regarded as truly revolutionary, must fulfil at least two basic conditions : one, a clear-cut programme of radical transformation of the entire society; two, organisations capable enough to rouse and mobilise, despite increasing governmental terror, an ever growing number of the toiling people for making a militant bid for power. Since our revolutionaries lacked both a well-defined revolutionary ideology and the necessary network of organisations embedded in the masses, they failed, quite predictably, to measure up to the stupendous responsibility of making a successful revolution in so vast a country as India. As for their Irish model, they completely misread the essence of the Irish situation. The armed revolts in Ireland rose phoenix - like, from its ashes, again and again and again, precisely because the Irish peasants looked upon the revolutionaries as their own armed fists beating their British oppressors.

It is a measure of the complexity of the debate that yet a new label has been attached to this movement in recent years. The new label which calls its participants national revolutionaries, arguably has its strong points and seems to be gaining in popularity. The movement unquestionably was national, because the achievement of complete national independence was its inflexible aim; it was also revolutionary since it tenaciously adhered to the credo that a government which ruled by the sword, by the sword alone could it be destroyed.The definition also wisely refrains from calling them social revolutionaries as they did not possess any blueprint of a new social order. Yet, it is not entirely irreproachable. It can be faulted more on historical than on semantic grounds.The terms - national revolution and national revolutionaries - became widely current only since the end of the Second World War when armed national liberation struggles in colonial and semi-colonial countries swept on in a surging tide, thereby investing those terms with newer connotations. What, according to these national revolutionaries, is the nation? Who, according to them, are the people? To them, the peasantry which constituted more than 80 percent of the population was the nation and the people. Peasant question, peasant participation,in short, the agrarian revolution formed the mainspring of all their radical activities. But our revolutionaries, being completely blind to

the supreme importance of the peasant question, can hardly be called national revolutionaries, in the newly acquired sense of the term. This blindness was their Achilles' heel. It is therefore no wonder that their voyage which began in a high tide, was soon bound in shallows and miseries.

Then what were they ? Terrorists ? Anarchists ? Terro-Communists? Revolutionaries? National Revolutionaries? or, something else ?

Since the answer to each one of these questions is a mixture of yes and no, the choice conceivably is difficult. The present author, however, has preferred to describe them as revolutionary terrorists because, according to his humble judgement, this epithet approximates the reality of their movement most closely. By trying to bring about a radical change in the political order, they earned, the hard way, the distinction of being regarded as revolutionaries. Yet, their ideology (active heroes - passive masses) their organisation (secret splintered groups of petty-bourgeois youth, separated from the broad masses by walls of mutual disbelief) and methodology (terrorist attacks on individual tyrants) remained basically terroristic, in spite of the unique event of the Chittagong Armoury Raid or the slow, painful, uphill journey towards a more comprehensive revolutionary outlook in the later years.

The cardinal weaknesses of this movement are fairly well known. Some of them were common to this kind of movement elsewhere in the world; some were peculiar to that in Bengal alone. Instead of adding arbitrarily to the list of these weaknesses, whether general or particular, the author has attempted, with additional evidences and arguments, to re-examine a few of them in their exact historical context so as to ascertain their specific impact on the course of events. In doing so, he has tried to steer clear of the recent tendency of exaggerating some of the drawbacks of the movement. These exaggerations relate mainly to the Hindu revivalist trend inside the movement, its relative isolation from the masses and its alleged ultimate debacle.

The author has tried to establish the fact the Hindu revivalist trend, which was almost coeval with this movement, gradually weakened and influenced the revolutionaries less and less with the roll of years. Since the late 20s, with the complete eclipse of Pulin Das and his questionable politics, with the decline of the Karmi Sangha, with the rise of the Revolt Group and the restless search for a new revolutionary ideology, Hindu religiosity lost its appeal; and occasional links of the revolutionaries with Hindu communal elements were severed. The Kali Cult or the Cult of the Gita no longer stirred their souls. Interestingly enough, the early esoteric practice at the time of formal recruitment or new

members was, by now, abandoned. This was also the time when the insistence upon celibacy as a pre-condition for joining the organisation was given up and female workers began to reinforce the ranks of the revolutionaries in an increasing number. These were also the years when Muslim participation in the movement became noticeable for the first time, as in Chittagong.

It is no less significant that after the collapse of the movement, none of the revolutionaries - from the leaders to the rank and file - joined any Hindu communalist organisation. The bulk of the active revolutionaries joined the C.P.I. or sundry other socialist groups; many of the well-known dadas with their handful of followers became full-fledged Congressmen while others just dropped out of politics, like weary travellers discontinuing the march. That none of them drifted to Hindu Mahasabha is a noticeable triumph of the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal. There was no V.D. Savarkar from the ranks of the ex-dadas. Even Satin Sen[3] stayed with the Congress.

The isolation of the revolutionaries from the mass should not be exaggerated either. In Bengal politics of the time, urban Hindu middle classes formed the decisive core of the political

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3 Satin Sen was a well-known revolutionary of Barisal. It was alleged that during the riots in east Bengal in 1927, he sent arms to Anil Roy of Sri Sangha to use them against the Muslim. See R.E.A. Ray's Report on the Dacca Sri Sangha, p. 9.

community, the workers and peasants occupying, till then, only the fringe of the arena. With that vocal, articulate political elite, the revolutionaries, in fact, had viable links. Had it not been the case, they could not have played such a role, so disproportionately bigger than their number, in the affairs of the Bengal Congress; nor could the authorities be compelled, more and more, to treat these adversaries as political elements and political prisoners. The vast concourse of mournful and angry people that accompanied the dead body of Jatin Das from Howrah Station to Keoratala Burning Ghat constituted, till that date, the biggest anti-British political rally in the biggest city of India.[4] The people's tribute to Jatin Das was as heroic and as great as his martyrdom. It was an episode worthy of an epic tale. The numerous examples the author has cited in this study testify to the fact that the emotional, if not always physical, links of the revolutionaries with the political community were intimate enough to sustain the movement in those dreadful hours when all seemed lost.

The tendency to exaggerate the failure of this movement is equally unhistorical. What this movement achieved during its short but stormy career and what it left as a legacy have become an inalienable part of the country's political continuum. At a time

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4 Kiron Das : interview with the author.

when the Congress leaders, even of the extremist school, could not aspire after anything more radical than the attainment of Dominion Status, euphemistically called Swaraj, the participants of the movement raised the full-throated demand for complete national independence and in that demand they stood firm as a rock. Unlike the national leaders of the time who hesitated to move beyond constitutional means of agitation and who, while delivering fiery speeches in public meetings, preferred to lead a life of ease at home, these revolutionaries, practising what they preached, staked their all, including their lives, for the redemption of the pledge they had taken. Though a hopeless political minority, a constantly hunted and persecuted lot, these revolutionaries, by their message and by their example and more so by their martyrdom, inspired, in no small measure, the entire national movement to raise its target from Swaraj to Purna Swaraj.

These are familiar facts. What, however, is not so familiar is that their contribution to this advancement was even more concrete and constructive, specific and spectacular. This has been documented in some detail in Chapter IV in context of the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928. There was thunder in the air and this session witnessed the largest ever gathering of Bengal revolutionaries, practically from all groups and factions. That Subhas Chandra Bose remained firm in his determination to move the

resolution demanding complete independence in spite of the vacillations of the younger Nehru, was due, among other causes, to the solid support he received from the serried ranks of the revolutionaries gathered around him on that occasion. Though Bose's resolution was voted down by an unimpressive margin, the leadership was quick enough to realise the mood of the rising generation of patriots and to feel the rapid pulse of the nation, straining at the leash. To assuage the aggrived feelings of the militant patriots, it was provided that if within the next one year, the demand for Dominion Status was not conceded, the Congress would launch Civil Disobedience movement for the attainment of Purna Swaraj. What happened since then is common knowledge. But the contribution of the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal in bringing about this dramatic change is yet to become a part of that common knowledge. Had the revolutionaries achieved nothing else, this alone would have established their claim to nation's gratitude. But luckily, they achieved more.

In the field of political organisation as well, they blazed a new trail. Theirs were the first cadre-based political parties in modern India. Even today, political parties of the country regard this organisational method as worthy of emulation, without, however, recalling the debt they owe to thse pioneers.

In the ideological sphere also, their contributions have been no less abiding. The quest for a new revolutionary theory in jails and camps generated a new intellectual ferment which did not remain confined within the prison walls. It spread by sympathy, far and wide, in trade unions and Kissan Sabhas and was able, by the late 30s, to draw within its widening sweep some of the brightest students and teachers from schools, colleges and universities, thus signalling the advent of a new political force in Bengal. Incidentally, this was also the time when Jawaharlal Nehru was preaching the tenets of socialism across the country. Both were the expressions of the same historical urges that were active from Spain to Shanghai.

It is hardly correct to say that the course of this movement was ultimately swallowed up by the dreary sands of disaster. The massive array of facts presented in the chapter on conversion (Chapter VIII) would rather seem to suggest that the movement did not end in a debacle but in its sublimation - in an ascent from revolutionary terrorism to a mass revolutionary movement. Such sublimation of an entire movement is unique in history. This uniqueness sharply distinguishes the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal from analgous movements in other countries. This sublimation was also successful in bringing about, under a common revolutionary banner, the largest measure of unity among the revolutionaries, hitherto divided into warring parties, groups and factions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

List of revolutionaries and sympathisers who were either Alderman or Councillors or employees of the Calcutta Corporation (1928-1931). This list was prepared by E.B.H. Baker, Special Officer, Special Branch.[1]

Alderman

(1) Sarat Chandra Bose, State Prisoner.

(2) Subhas Chandra Bose, State Prisoner; convicted under Sec. 124A, I.P.C. in 1930.

Councillors

(1) Bepin Ganguly, ex-detenu; convicted in Agarpara Dacoity Case in 1915.

(2) Indra Bidh, warned under D.I. Act 1916, helped revolutionaries with money.

(3) Prabhudayal Himatsingka, externed from Bengal in 1916 as he was suspected to have been involved in the Rodá Arms Theft Case.

(4) Dr. Narayan Roy, convicted in Jorabagan Conspiracy Case in 1930.

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[1] Home (Pol) File 126/1932, Sl. 1-8, W.B.S.A.
This list was published by the author in a Bengali Journal Parichaya, July 1978.

Employees

(1) Manmohon Bhattacharya, ex-detenu and ex-convict of the Alipore Bomb Conspiracy Case in 1908.

(2) Satish Chakraborty of Mymensingh, ex-detenu; employed by Subhas Bose as an Inspector, Calcutta Corporation, Collection Department.

(3) Sudhir Chakraborty, detenu.

(4) Sushil Kumar Ghosh, detenu.

(5) Satish Chandra Sarkar, assessment-Inspector of Corporation, a sympathiser of the revolutionaries.

(6) Debendra Dey alias Khoka, detenu; Inspector, Mosquito Brigade.

(7) Jananjan Neogi, "a rabid anti-British agitator"; convicted several times in making seditious speeches with lantern slides.

(8) Pulin Das, ex-Political convict, Dacca Conspiracy Case, 1910; lathi play instructor in Corporation Park.

(9) Brojendra Nath Datta, convicted in the Nalanga Conspiracy Case on 30 August 1910 and sentenced to 3 years r.i.

(10) Dr. Haradhan Das, accommodated volunteers in his house during the C.D. movement; a sympathiser of the revolutionaries.

(11) Binode Chakraborty, detenu; employed in Water-Works Department.

(12) Keshab Kundu, member, Purna Das's group of Madaripore.

(13) Sachin Sarkar, a bill-collector; member of the Karmi Sangha.

(14) Nripendra Lal Kar, employed in Central office of the Corporation; suspected to have been connected with Rasik Das, an accused in the Jorabagan Bomb Conspiracy Case.

(15) Chuni Mukherjee, ex-detenu; convicted in Arms Act, 1951.

(16) Satish Chakraborty of Khulna, detenu.

(17) Sailendra Nath Ghoshal, Deputy License Officer; it was alleged that he raised funds from Corporation employees for Congress works and for helping detenus and absconders; said to be concerned in the publication of unauthorised news-sheets.

Contractors

(1) Atul Ghosh, ex-detenu. He used to pay Rs.1,000 to Subhas Bose monthly towards party expenses; financed detenus Moti Singh and Suresh Das for helping absconders who came to Calcutta for committing murders.

(2) Amar Ghosh, detenu (both were brothers and proprietors of a firm under the name and style K.C. Ghosh & Co.).

List of revolutionaries or sympathisers who were employed in the education department of the Corporation :

(1) Kshitish Prasad Chattopadhyay, education officer; alleged that he spent large amount of money in helping Manoranjan Gupta while absconding; was in league with M.N.Roy, the "notorious communist".

(2) Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, ex-detenu.

(3) Amulya Adhikary, detenu.

(4) Durga Charan Bosu, ex-detenu.

(5) Himangshu Bose, detenu.

(6) Makhan Lal Bose, detenu.

(7) Narendra Chandra Bhadra, detenu.

(8) Pramatha Nath Bhadra, detenu.

(9) Jadabeswar Bhattacharya, detenu.

(10) Jatin Bhattacharya, detenu.

(11) Haridas alias Bhusan Chakraborty, detenu.

(12) Janardan Chakraborty, detenu.

(13) Nabadwip Das, ex-detenu.

(14) Pearymohon Das, detenu.

(15) Amulya Das Gupta, detenu.

(16) Atul Datta, detenu.

(17) Dhiren Datta, detenu.

(18) Rati Kanta Datta, detenu.

(19) Kali Sankar Ganguly, ex-detenu.

(20) Priyanath Ganguly, detenu.

(21) Tincowri Ganguly, detenu.

(22) Dhiren Kundu, detenu.

(23) Bidhu Bhusan Majumder, detenu, member of Purna Das's party.

(24) Phanindra Nath Mukherjee, detenu.

(25) Mokshedudin Khan, detenu; arms smuggler.

(26). Kumud Chandra Sen, detenu.

(27) Kshetra Singh, ex-detenu.

(28) Motilal Singh, detenu.

(29) Jiban Guha Thakurta, detenu.

(30) Broja Madhab Das, detenu

(31) Gopal Ghosh alias Kalidhan, a member of the Dacca Jugantar.

(32) Santi Shome, member of the Dacca Jugantar.

(33) Sarashi Nath Bose, connected with Suresh Das of Karmi Sangha.

(34) Dhirendra Nath Bose Majumder, member of Purna Das's party.

(35) Achyut Ghatak, detenu.

(36) Mona Banerjee, detenu.

(37) Himangshu Sen, member of Purna Das's party; convicted.

(38) Sarada Banerjee, member of Munshiganj Group; convicted for picketing.

(39) Bhupen Shome alias Akali,member of Munshiganj group.

(40) Jogesh Chandra Mitra, connected with Binode Behari Sinha in making bombs.

(41) Bolai Chatterjee, connected with Lohajang (Dacca) Party and arms smuggler.

(42) Himangshu Kar Dhar, arranged shelter for detenu Prabir Goswami.

(43) Birendra Kumar Sen Gupta, member Karmi Sangha.

(44) Md. Abdul Hamid, ex-detenu.

(45) Hemlal Chatterjee, a member of the Doulatpur Asram, Khulna, which was a well-known revolutionary haunt.

(46) Rajendra Prasad Singh, suspected to be concerned in arms smuggling; connected with the revolutionaries of Bihar.

(47) Sachinandan Das, an important member of Chittagong Jugantar.

(48) Ram Sukul Singh, convicted for picketing and rioting and sentenced to six months r.i. in 1930.

(49) Rajaram Panday, arrested in August 1930 for disseminating sedition.

(50) Jiban Chakraborty, convicted for picketing in 1930.

(51) Radharaman Mitra, convicted in the Meerat Conspiracy Case.

(52) Sidheswar Chatterjee, a revolutionary who was in Bombay for smuggling arms.

(53) Naren Parbat, a member of Purna Das's party.

(54) Birendra Nath Saha, convict.

(55) Bankim Chandra Guin, connected with the revolutionaries of Mymensingh.

(56) Ajit Kumar Bose, detenu.

(57) Jyotish Gupta, Assistant Secretary, Karmi Sangha.

(58) Nikhil Ranjan Bose, detenu.

(59) Sudhir Ghose, associate of ex-detenu Mohini Guha.

(60) Jitendra Nath Das Gupta, member, Karmi Sangha.

(61) Nibaran Chandra Ghosh, member, Karmi Sangha and connected with Satin Sen of Barisal.

(62) Rangalal Das, member Karmi Sangha.

(63) Hrishikesh Singha, convicted in the C.D. Movement in 1932.

(64) Hiralal Sen, brother of detenu Kumud Sen.

(65) Kulada Moitra, " a rabid labour agitator" and a revolutionary.

(66) Anil Chandra Biswas.

(67) Suren Roy, connected with Suresh Das and Bidhu Majumder of Madaripur group of Jugantar.

(68) Rabindra Nath Das, member, Tarun Sangha.

(69) Upen Datta, detenu.

(70) Satyendra Mohan Sen, connected with Munshiganj group of revolutionaries.

(71) Girish Chandra Sil, connected with arms smuggling for revolutionary purpose.

(72) Rupendra Pal, a member of Comilla Anushilan.

(73) Ananta Chakraborty, transported for life in connection with the murder of Rai Bahadur, B.N.Chatterjee in Alipore Jail in 1926.

(74) Rohini Ganguli, a Civil Disobedience worker; connected with the revolutionary group of South Calcutta.

Women

(1) Saralabala Halder, convicted in Dalhousie Square Bomb Case.

(2) Kamala Das Gupta, detenu.

(3) Miss Premlata Bose, a member, Jugantar.

(4) Sailabala Debi, connected with detenu Kumud Sen.

(5) Kamala Das, connected with detenu Rasik Das of the Jorabagan Bomb Conspiracy Case.

(6) Asha Das Gupta, connected with the Chittagong group of Surjya Sen.

(7) Suhasini Debi, detenu.

(8) Parul Sen, connected with Santi Sen of Barisal.

(9) Pramila Gupta, detenu.

(10) Miss Chhayamoyee Chatterjee, convicted for picketing and sentenced to four months r.i., a sympathiser of the revolutionaries.

(11) Prabhat Nalini Mitra, connected with Bina Das who attempted on the life of the Governor of Bengal in 1932.

(12) Priti Das Gupta, member,Chittagong Jugantar; she is said to have rendered substantial help to the Chittagong absconders.

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Appendix B

The table gives the number of arms and ammunition, looted by the revolutionaries during the Chittagong uprising, recovered by police after the revolutionaries had left the place and after skirmishes with them or on persons of arrested absconders, and apprehended by the authorities to be still in the possession of the party.[1]

	Arms with the Party		Recovered	Still with party
I	20 Pistols and revolvers	6	pistols and	10 pistols or
		4	revolvers	revolvers.
	Pistol ammunition	114		Unknown
	Revolver amunition	138		Unknown
	12 bore shot guns	11		1
	12 bore shot guns		loaded 384	
	Cartridges		fired 98	Unknown
II	Captured at Police Armoury			
	5.450 Colt revolvers	3		2
	691 Rounds of amunition	116	live &	541 (accurate figure
		34	spent	of fired rounds
				not known).
	2.380 Webley revolvers	1		1
	56.476 Musket	32		24

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[1] R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Activities of Terrorists in Bengal during the period April to December,1930,p.48.

3,710 rounds of buckshot ammunition	899 live and 1,265 spent	1,546	(accurate figure of rounds not known).
937 rounds of buckshot ammunition	301 live and 211 spent	425	(accurate figure of fired rounds not known).

III Captured at Auxiliary Force Armoury

12 Mark VI Webley revolvers	10	2
4 Mark IV Webley revolvers	1	3
14 Mark III Webley revolvers	3	11
1 Mauser Pistol	1	
1 Lady's pistol	1	
3.476 Muskets	2	1

Appendix C

It is a map of the northern half of the district of Chittagong,[1] i.e., the Sadar Subdivision.

The green dots south and north of the Karnafuli to the east of the Halda river, and south of the Sangu river show the situation of the military posts in the latter part of May 1933 when Tarakeswar Dastidar was arrested.

The red dots in the same area show the places of arrest of absconders.

The red circle round Saroatali shows the principal area of the Jugantar activity. Most of their shelters were situated in this neighbourhood and therefore the largest numbers of absconders were caught there. The map illustrates the fact that armed actions were planned in that area and then committed in the town, and to that area the perpetrators, when they could, returned for shelter.

The dotted red line covering portions of thanas Rauzan, Boalkhali, Patiya and Anwara shows the approximate area of the Jugantar organisation. The dotted lines round Sitakund and Mirsarai in the north show two more rather restricted areas of the Jugantar activity. Their significance lies in the fact that they lay on the line of communication between the Jugantar headquarters round Saroatali and the outside world, and so furnished assistance and shelters to party members and absconders passing in and out of the district. From Durgapore-Mirsarai area it was possible to reach the

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[1] Home (Pol) File 277/1934, Sl. 22, p. 5.

Jugantar headquarters via forest paths in the Ramgarh Sitakund Reserved Forest in the north. From Sitakund it was possible to go through the hills either by Baraiya Dhala, north of Sitakund or by Kumira Dhala, south of Sitakund. All the three routes avoided passage through Chittagong town, and were the only passes over the hills through a comparatively safe area via thanas Fatick Chery and Rauzan to the Jugantar headquarters at Saroatali.

North of the Karnafuli and west of the Halda rivers, the green dots show the deposition of military posts at the beginning of March 1934 after the military action had started against the Anushilan. The green circle round Chaudhurihat and Madarsha was the Anushilan headquarters. The dotted green line covering nearly the whole map shows the area of the Anushilan organisation as a whole. It will be observed that it overlaps and includes the Jugantar area wherein organisations of both the parties co-existed - each following its own line of action - violence by the Jugantar, waiting by the Anushilan.

The red dot in Hathazari thana was the scene of the arrest of the four absconders of the Anushilan who were arrested on 24 February 1934.

Chittagong town was of course always the scene of activity of both the Anushilan and the Jugantar. But the fact was that the head-quarters of the Jugantar had for three and half years at least, been in the red circle round Saroatali, while that of the Anushilan was in green circle round Chaudhurihat and Madarsha. The only marks added to the town of Chittagong therefore are the two red dots which denote the arrest of the four Anushilan absconders, mentioned above.

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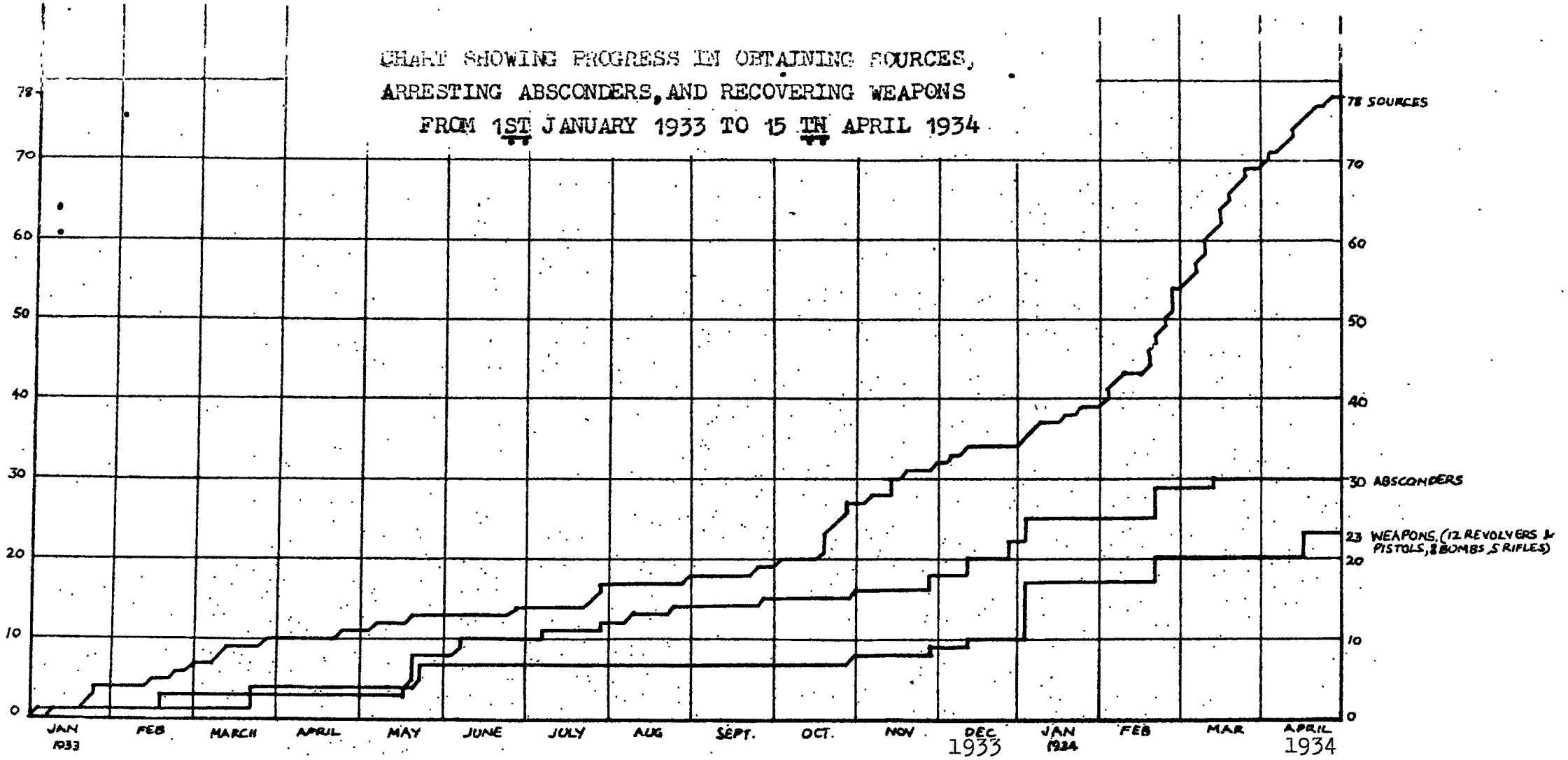
CHART SHOWING PROGRESS IN OBTAINING SOURCES,
ARRESTING ABSCONDERS, AND RECOVERING WEAPONS
FROM 1ST JANUARY 1933 TO 15 TH APRIL 1934



Appendix D

Graph showing progress in obtaining sources and arresting absconders and recovering weapons from 1st January 1933 to 15 April 1934.[1]

The graph shows the progress made by the district police in (a) obtaining sources of information (b) arrest of absconders and (c) recovery of arms. The salient feature of the graph is that immediate results were obtained under all these three heads as soon as the new line of action was put into force since mid - 1932. From January 1933, as the graph shows, the results steadily improved with very marked rapidity. With the improvement of intelligence, there was a corresponding improvement in the arrest of absconders and seizure of weapons. As a result of the propaganda and activity of the previous dry weather months, the graph shows a marked improvement since June 1933. That improvement continued even during the rainy months - from June to September. From the end of September onwards, with renewed activity in every direction in better weather conditions, the police achieved spectacular success in obtaining sources, arresting absconders and seizing weapons.

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[1] File 277/1934, Sl. 22, Sec. III, p. 19.

The following table shows the number of l
distributed by the Jugantar for proposed

	Number distributed according to location of a
Mymensingh Party in Calcutta	12 (8 alu ni 4 ca t-
Anuja Sen and Dinesh Majumder for Dalhousie Square bomb outrages	9 [illegible] iu
Produced by Suren Datta in Calcutta	-
Barisal	12 "
Rangpur	4 "
Rajsahi	2 "
Bogra	2 "
Khulna	[illegible] "
Munshiganj,Dacca	14 "
Dacca	15-20"
Mymensingh	7- "
Noakhali	4- "
Madaripur(Faridpur)	7- "
Faridpur	[illegible]
Midnapore	[illegible]
Jessore	[illegible]
Hooghly	[illegible]
Total :-	94
Total distribution according to agent No.560 (a confessing revolutionary)	100 [illegible]

[1] R.E.A., Ray : Report on the Activities of Terrorist [illegible]

Appendix F

A list of some of the active organisers of the CPI (compiled by the IB, 1938) who while in detentions and jails espoused communism. It also indicates their fields of activities after their release.[1]

Calcutta

(1) Kali Kumar Sengupta (ex-detenu) Trade Union Congress (T.U.C.).

(2) Abdul Momin (ex-detenu), T.U.C., Bengal Provincial Krishak Committee, (B.P.K.C.).

(3) Abdur Rezzak Khan (ex-detenu), T.U.C.

(4) Gopen Chakraborty (ex-convict), T.U.C.

(5) Abdul Halim (ex-detenu), T.U.C.

(6) Dharani Goswami (ex-convict), (ex-detenu).

(7) Peary Mohan Das (ex-detenu).

(8) Nirapada Mukherjee (ex-detenu), B.P.K.C.

(9) Sudhangshu Majumder (ex-detenue,Barisal),T.U.C.

(10) Sachi Gopal Ganguly (ex-detenu, Barisal).

(11) Sisir Roy (ex-detenu), T.U.C.

(12) Sailendra Nath Mukherjee (ex-detenu)

(13) Ranadhir Das Gupta (ex-detenu, Chittagong).

(14) Rabi Roy Chaudhuri (ex-detenu,Anushilan Revolt Group),T.U.C.

(15) Hazara Singh Akali (ex-convict,Gadar Party),T.U.C.

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[1] R.E.A., Ray : Note on the Development of the Communist Movement in Bengal (January to August 1938), pp.18-24.

(16) Deb Kumar Das (ex-convict).

(17) Jagajjit Sarkar (ex-detenu).

(18) Jyotirmoy Sengupta of Dacca (ex-convict).

(19) Miss Kamala Chatterjee (ex-detenu), Bengal Provincial Students' Federation (B.P.S.F.).

(20) Sunirmal Sen (ex-detenu, ex-convict).

Presidency Range

24 Parganas

(1) Murari Saran Chakraborty (ex-detenu,Jugantar), Krishak Samiti (K.S.).

(2) Satyanarayan Chatterjee (ex-detenu, Jugantar) T.U.C.

(3) Nandalal Chatterjee (ex-detenu, Anushilan).

(4) Provash Sarkar (ex-detenu, Jugantar) S.F., T.U.C.

(5) Murari Bhaduri of Faridpur (ex-detenu) K.S.

Nadia

(1) Suresh Chandra Roy (ex-detenu, Anushilan), T.U.C.

(2) Sushil Chatterjee (ex-detenu,Jugantar), Congress.

(3) Tarakdas Banerjee (ex-detenu, Jugantar), Congress.

(4) Manmatha Nath Paramanik (ex-detenu,Jugantar),Congress.

(5) Dhiren Das Gupta (ex-detenu,Anushilan), Congress.

(6) Nirode Khan (ex-detenu, Jugantar), Congress.

Murshidabad

(1) Ananta Kumar Bhattacharjee (ex-detenu, Anushilan), Congress, S.F.

(2) Prahlad Singha (ex-detenu, Anushilan), Congress.

Jessore

(1) K.B.Roy (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S., S.F.

(2) Sachin Mitra (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(3) Dibyendu Sardar alias Rabi Majumder (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(4) Amar Rakshit (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(5) Radha Ranjan Chatterjee (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

Khulna

(1) Nanigopal Bose Roychaudhuri (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(2) Nagendra Nath Mitra (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(3) Narayan Chatterjee (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(4) Shib Sankar Mitra (ex-detenu, Jessore-Khulna Youth Association).

(5) Anil Ghosh (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

Burdwan Range

Burdwan

(1) Helaram Chatterjee (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S., T.U.C.

Birbhum

(1) Amarendra Nath Sarkar (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(2) Baidya Nath Chakraborty (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

Midnapore

(1) Sachindra Nath Maity (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(2) Khagendra Nath Maity (ex-detenu, Jugantar), T.U.C.

Hooghly

(1) Panchugopal Bhaduri (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.,B.P.S.F.

(2) Phanindra Mohan Banerjee (ex-detenu,Jugantar),Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.)

(3) Smritish Banerjee (ex-detenu, Jugantar), C.S.P.

(4) Kalicharan Ghosh (ex-detenu, Jugantar),C.S.P.,S.F.,T.U.C.

(5) Pramath Datta (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(6) Manoranjan Hazra (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(7) Serajul Haque (ex-detenu, Jugantar), S.F.

Howrah

(1) Biren Banerjee (ex-detenu, Jugantar),T.U.C.

(2) Kanailal Banerjee (ex-detenu, H.S.R.A.), T.U.C.

(3) Manmohon Adhikary (ex-detenu, Jugantar), S.F.

Rajsahi Range

Rajsahi

(1) Santosh Bhattacharya (ex-detenu,Anushilan Revolt Group),K.S.

(2) Debendra Moitra(ex-detenu,Anushilan Revolt Group), S.F.

(3) Anil Batabyal (ex-detenu, Anushilan Revolt Group), K.S.

Malda

(1) Narendra Chakraborty (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

Pabna

(1) Sudhindra Sarkar (ex-detenu,Anushilan Revolt Group),K.S.,T.U.C.

Dinajpur

(1) Bibhuti Bhusan Guha (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(2) Jyotish Chandra Sen (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(3) Kalipada Sarkar (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(4) Karali Biswas (ex-detenu, Jugantar), T.U.C.,C.S.P.

Rangpur

(1) Suresh Prasad Roychaudhuri (ex-detenu,Jugantar),K.S.,C.S.P.

(2) Moni Krishna Sen (ex-detenu,Jugantar),K.S.,Congress.

(3) Abani Bagchi (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(4) Sachin Ghosh (ex-detenu, Jugantar),K.S.,Congress.

(5) Sibdas Lahiri (ex-detenu, Jugantar), S.F.,Congress.

(6) Sunil Roy (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(7) Dinesh Chandra Lahiri (ex-detenu,Jugantar),K.S.,Congress.

(8) Bibhuti Bhusan Lahiri (ex-detenu, Jugantar),K.S.,Congress.

Jalpaiguri

(1) Biren Datta of Dacca (ex-detenu, Anushilan), S.F.

Dacca Range

Dacca

(1) Gopal Basak (ex-convict), T.U.C., C.S.P.

(2) Nalindra Sen (ex-detenu, Anushilan),T.U.C.

(3) Ramesh Roy of Tripura (ex-detenu,Anushilan),T.U.C.,S.F.

(4) Bankim Chakraborty of Comilla (ex-convict,externee,Anushilan), S.F.,T.U.C.

(5) Sailesh Nag alias Nepal (ex-detenu,Sri Sangha), T.U.C.

(6) Nripendra Datta (ex-convict,Jugantar),T.U.C.

(7) Samarendra Sen (ex-detenu, Sri Sangha), T.U.C.

(8) Sanjoy Sen (ex-detenu, Anushilan), T.U.C.

Mymensingh

(1) Pratul Bhattacharya (ex-state Prisoner).

(2) Sudhindra Roy alias Khoka (ex-convict,Jugantar),K.S.,S.F.

(3) Rabi Neogi (ex-detenu, ex-convict, Jugantar), S.F.

(4) Nagen Sarkar (ex-detenu, Y.C.L.), K.S., S.F.

(5) Altab Ali alias Ananda Majumder (ex-convict, ex-detenu) A.R.G., S.F.

(6) Ali Newaz (ex-detenu, ex-convict, Y.C.L.), K.S., S.F.

(7) Manindra Singh (ex-detenu, Y.C.L.), K.S.,Congress.

(8) Prafulla Datta alias Ashu (ex-detenu,Jugantar),S.F.,K.S.

(9) Sachindra Home (ex-detenu,Anushilan Revolt Group),K.S.

(10) Jagadish Bhattacharya (ex-detenu,ex-convict,Jugantar),K.S.,S.F.

Faridpur

(1) Bagla Prasanna Guha (ex-detenu, Anushilan), S.F., C.S.P.

(2) Subodh Mukherjee (ex-detenu,Anushilan),S.F.

Bakharganj Range

Barisal

(1) Biren Das Gupta (ex-detenu, Jugantar),K.S.,S.F.,T.U.C.

(2) Surhid Datta (ex-detenu, Anushilan).

(3) Nayan Ranjan Das Gupta (ex-detenu Jugantar).

(4) Suresh Chandra Ganguly (ex-detenu,Jugantar),K.S.,T.U.C.

(5) Nani Sen Gupta (ex-detenu, Anushilan).

(6) Himangshu Das Gupta (ex-detenu, Jugantar).

(7) Manoranjan Bose (ex-detenu, Jugantar).

(8) Tarapada Ghosh (ex-detenu, Jugantar).

(9) Hiranmoy Chatterjee (ex-convict, Jugantar), T.U.C.

(10) Sailen Roy alias Ada (ex-detenu, Jugantar).

(11) Nirendra Nath Ghosh (ex-detenu,Jugantar),T.U.C.

(12) Naren Kar Gupta (ex-detenu,Anushilan Revolt Group).

(13) Mukul Sen (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

Noakhali

(1) Ashit Ranjan Ghosh (ex-detenu, Jugantar),K.S.,C.S.P.,S.F.

(2) Prafulla Bhattacharya (ex-detenu, Jugantar),K.S.,C.S.P.,S.F.

(3) Nagarbasi Roy (ex-detenu, ex-convict,Anushilan),C.S.P.

(4) Bhagaban Chandra Biswas (ex-convict, Anushilan),C.S.P.

Tippera

(1) Satyabrata Sen (ex-detenu,Jugantar),S.F.,K.S.,Congress.

(2) Amulya Kanchan Datta Roy (ex-detenu, Jugantar), S.F.

(3) Ratindra Goswami (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(4) Nripendra Pal (ex-detenu, Jugantar), K.S.

(5) Lalit Datta Gupta (ex-detenu,Anushilan),S.F.,K.S.,Congress.

(6) Raiharan Chakraborty (ex-detenu,Anushilan),C.S.P.

(7) Ranjit Roy Chaudhuri (ex-detenu, Anushilan), S.F.

(8) Anantalal De (ex-convict, Anushilan), K.S.

(9) Prabhat Deb Barman (ex-Agartala State restrainee),K.S.

(10) Biren Datta (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(11) Premangshu Chaudhuri (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

Chittagong

(1) Kalpataru Sen Gupta (ex-detenu, Anushilan).

(2) Sumati Majumder (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(3) Bankim Datta (ex-detenu, Anushilan), K.S.

(4) Fakir Sen (ex-convict, Jugantar), S.F., K.S.

(5) Kamaniya Kumar Das (ex-detenu, Anushilan).

(6) Renode Chakraborty (ex-detenu, Jugantar).

(7) Bankim Sen (ex-detenu,Jugantar).

(8) Sudhangshu Sarkar (ex-detenu, Anushilan), S.F., K.S.

(9) Sachin Nandi (ex-detenu, Anushilan),S.F.

(10) Chittapriya Das Chaudhuri (ex-detenu,Anushilan),T.U.C.

(11) Sudhangshu Sarkar (ex-detenu, Anushilan),S.F.,K.S.

(12) Purnendu Dastidar (ex-detenu, Jugantar), T.U.C.

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Sec. I	(a)	Unpublished government records
	(b)	Published government records
Sec. II		Newspapers, journals and periodicals
Sec.III	(a)	Unpublished books, articles, monographs,etc.
	(b)	Published articles, monographs etc.
Sec. IV	(a)	Published books in English
	(b)	Published books in Bengali and Hindi
Sec. V		Interviews with revolutionaries.

Apart from these, the author has used two jail diaries, containing notes on Marxism belonging to Bhupesh Gupta and Tincowri Mukherjee. These have been procured through Santimoy Roy and Tincowri Mukherjee himself. Moreover, two letters written to the author - one from Sudhangshu Adhikary of the Young Comrades' League, dated Tribeni, Hooghly, 31 December 1981, and the other from Kali Sarkar of the Hilli Dacoity Case dated Balurghat, West Dinajpur, 14 December 1981, helped him a lot. He is grateful to all of them.

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Section V

Interviews with revolutionaries. The abbreviations following each entry indicate the political parties with which the persons were/ are associated. The date and place of taking interviews are also mentioned.

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Bhattacharya, Manmohon : Jugantar; Khardha, 24 Parganas, 8 December 1979.

Bhattacharya, Suresh : H.S.R.A.; Kanpur, 17 March, 1971.

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Chakraborty, Nagendra Sekhar : Jugantar; Calcutta, 6 December,1975.

Chakraborty, Nirode : Y.C.L. - C.P.I.(M); Calcutta, 8 October,1980.

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De, Kalikinkar : Chittagong; Dum Dum,Calcutta,6 August,1981.

De Sarkar, Pulakesh : Anushilan; Calcutta, 1 June, 1978.

Ganguli, Ajit : Jugantar -CPI; Calcutta, 8 May, 1981.

Ghosh, Amar Krishna : Jugantar - Congress; Calcutta,7 September, 1975.

Ghosh, Ganesh : Chittagong - CPI (M); Calcutta,6 January,1975.

Ghosh, Kamakshya; B.V. - CPI; Midnapore, 16 May,1976.

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Pal, Makkan: Anushilan - R.S.P.; Calcutta,11 December, 1981.

Prasad, Dr. Gaya : H.S.R.A.; Kanpur, 16 March, 1971.

Roy, Santimoy : Jugantar - CPI; Calcutta, 21 May, 1981.

Roy, Subodh : Chittagong - CPI(M); Calcutta,7 December,1982.

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Sehanavis, Chinmohon : CPI; Calcutta, 10 October, 1979.

Sen, Naren : Anushilan - CPI (M); Calcutta, 16 December, 1981.

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